



# METHODIST

## Pamphlets for the People.

---

### VOLUME FIRST.

---

EDITED BY THOMAS O. SUMMERS, D.D.

Nashville, Tenn.:

PUBLISHED BY E. STEVENSON & F. A. OWEN, AGENTS,

FOR THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH.

1857.

---

---

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1857, by  
E. STEVENSON & F. A. OWEN, AGENTS,  
In the Office of the Clerk of the District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee.

---

---

---

---

STEREOTYPED AND PRINTED BY A. A. STITT,  
SOUTHERN METHODIST PUBLISHING HOUSE, NASHVILLE, TENN.

---

---

# Contents.

---

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP. BY THE EDITOR.....	
WHY ARE YOU A METHODIST?.....	
METHODISM NOT A SCHISM.....	
METHODIST EPISCOPACY. BY THE EDITOR.....	
METHODIST ITINERANCY. BY W. M. WIGHTMAN, D.D. ....	
CLASS-MEETINGS. BY THE EDITOR.....	
THE LABYRINTH, OR POPISH CIRCLE. BY EPISCOPIUS.....	
APOSTOLICAL SUCCESSION: A SUMMARY OF OBJECTIONS TO THE MODERN CLAIM.....	
METHODIST MINISTERS TRUE MINISTERS OF CHRIST.....	
METHODISTS HAVE THE TRUE CHRISTIAN SACRAMENTS.....	
SUBJECTS AND MODE OF BAPTISM.....	
THE RITE OF CONFIRMATION TESTED. BY L. M. LEE, D.D.....	





## Editorial Note.

---

THE renewed and persevering hostility manifested, in various quarters, to the Methodist Episcopal Church, demands from us a defence of those disciplinary and doctrinal principles which constitute the Methodist system. In order to this, we have thought it advisable to issue several series of Methodist Pamphlets for the People. The present series has especial reference to Church government. Some of the pamphlets are original, and all the rest have been taken from approved sources—such alterations and additions having been made as were necessary to fit them for our purpose. The pamphlets contained in this volume are also put up in neat packages, for the convenience of those who may wish them for gratuitous circulation.

The Editor.

NASHVILLE, TENN., February 5th, 1857.



**PAMPHLETS FOR THE PEOPLE.**



## CHURCH-MEMBERSHIP.

---

MANY people of the world, who do not wish to be considered unfriendly to Christianity, not unfrequently ask why clergymen and others so urgently insist on their becoming members of the church. The question is important—we will furnish an answer.

1. *The first reason is, because the church has Christ for its Founder.*

In one sense, indeed, the church is a human society—a voluntary association. Its members are moral agents, and no one can be *forced* into connection with it. But, in another sense, the church is divine; and hence arises an obligation for all men to belong to it. “The Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust in it.” Isa. xiv. 32. “Upon this rock I will build my church.” Matt. xvi. 18. But why build the church at all, if it is a matter of no importance whether or not we become members of it? Indeed, how can the church be built, if *men* are the materials out of which it is constructed, unless they allow themselves to be worked into the building? Besides, is it not a reflection on the divine Architect to turn aside from this masterpiece of his wisdom, power, and benevolence, as if it merited less regard than the productions of a puny mortal?

2. *This divine institution has not been established without great cost.*

Not laying any special stress upon the *cost* of the church during the preparatory stages of its history—in the time of patriarch and lawgiver, prophet and priest—see what

its last development has cost. It has cost the incarnation of the Son of God—his personal ministries—his mysterious sufferings—his mediatorial agency, continued through every age since his exaltation, involving the mission of the Holy Ghost and that of the apostles and their successors in the Christian ministry to the end of time. “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” “And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” Eph. v. 25, iv. 11, 12. A needless outlay of service and suffering, expedient and agency, if, after all, the church is an affair of no moment. The end will not justify the means. But if this savours of impiety—and it does more than that—it would be well to inquire whether an institution that cost so much might not be of sufficient consequence to justify our regard, to deserve our admiration, and to demand our adherence. If the church is a spiritual temple, constructed of living stones, cemented with the blood of Christ, it has too much sacredness, too much divinity about it—it is too valuable—it *has cost too much* to be contemned or ignored, without involving the pains and penalties adjudged to profaneness and ingratitude.

3. *Perpetuity has been guaranteed to the church by its Founder.*

He has given the church a thousand pledges and stipulations, promises and oaths, affording the strongest possible assurance that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” It is a citadel which has hitherto been, and shall ever continue to be, proof against all the sapping and bombardment of the enemy. It is a “kingdom which cannot be moved”—“an everlasting kingdom.” Heb. xii. 28; Dan. vii. 27. It is thus an institution for every age. And it was not more binding upon the first Christians to belong to it than it is upon us. It stands out in broad and bold distinction from the world, in all the successive periods of time, as the kingdom of heaven, set up on the

earth, according to prophecy, and sustained according to promise—one would suppose for a better fortune than that which befell its Founder—to be despised and rejected of men.

4. *He who is the Founder is also the Head of the church.*

We know nothing of papal heads or regal heads : Christ himself “is the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” Eph. i. 22, 23. One would think it were no trifling matter to be constituted a member of that body of which Christ is the Head. It is an unspeakable privilege, benefit, and honour to be taken into so close a relationship with the Son of God ; and those who refuse this incorporation into the body of Christ are chargeable with equal infatuation, rebellion, and ingratitude. If those who persecute the church, persecute the Head of the church, then those who treat it with cold neglect or philosophic indifference, will find in the end that in contemning the church, they have contemned its exalted Head ; and this is a sin which we suppose few will consider less than mortal.

5. *The church is the divinely constituted preserver and propagator of the Christian religion.*

It is called by St. Paul, “the pillar and ground of the truth.” The Christian Scriptures were written by inspired men, who occupied the front rank in this society. Those divine writings were committed to the custody of particular churches and individual Christians, by whom they were communicated to others—copies and translations were indefinitely multiplied, and circulated all over the world, and this at so early a date that the loss of the sacred records, or the confounding of them with apocryphal writings, or the material corruption of them, either by carelessness or design, became absolutely impossible. The church itself, not the society at Jerusalem, much less that at Rome, or any other particular church, but the Church catholic—that is, the universal church—is a living



organization of the Christian religion : it bodies forth in form and substance the doctrines, duties, privileges—all the elements and attributes of Christianity, and in this way preserves it in existence. And there is no other way of making this divine system the religion of the world, to the exclusion of all false religions, but by making the church, which is catholic in its name, constitution, claims and destiny, catholic also in its actual extension. Hence the prayer of the church : “God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us. That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations.” Ps. lxxvii. The responsibility of thus preserving and propagating the true religion devolves upon the church in every successive age. It is a responsibility which is binding upon every Christian, and which no one can discharge in a state of voluntary isolation from the church, no matter how great may be the contributions of his pen and purse in support of the principles and institutions of Christianity. The maintenance and propagation of the Christian religion in the world is a great work, requiring organization and concert, effort and sacrifice, on the most extended scale ; and we do not see how any man can be called a friend to the cause, who will not openly espouse it. “He that is not with me, is against me ; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad.” Matt. xii. 30. Let those who consider it a small matter to be or not to be a member of the church, consider if it be a small matter to be a friend or an enemy of Christianity and its divine Author.

6. *The performance of our duty as Christians involves church-membership.*

It is the province of the church to proclaim, expound, and enforce the laws of God, some of which, indeed, so far as materiality and form are concerned, may be obeyed without direct connection with the church—for example, the common moralities of life, as also private and family devotion. To what extent, in what spirit, and with what result, those duties are discharged by those who are not

members of the church, are points which invite inquiry; but they are not in the line of our present undertaking. The regular performance of public and social worship, and the maintenance of Christian discipline, suppose and demand a church organization. "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise." Ps. c. 4. "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; and let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another." "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you." Heb. x. 23-25; xiii. 17. That duties of this class are as binding upon us as any other, will not be questioned by any one who bows to the authority of the Bible; yet none but church-members can perform them. It is the duty of all to receive baptism, but baptism can be administered only as a church ordinance, admitting the subject into the communion of the church—and if afterward he abandons the church he virtually renounces his baptism. It is the duty of all Christians to receive the Lord's supper. "This do in remembrance of me," is the Saviour's dying command. But the Lord's supper is a church ordinance, and can be celebrated by none but members of the church. Non-connection with the church involves, therefore, the neglect of those duties which are binding on us as the followers of Christ. There are many people who refuse to join the church because connection with it leads to the discharge of those duties, being "willingly ignorant" of the fact that they are bound to join the church in order that they might perform them. That would be a strange government which would allow the omission of any duty to be a valid excuse for the omission of others depending on its discharge. The obligation to perform any act involves the obligation to take the steps necessary to its performance. They, therefore, who refuse to join the church will be held respon-

sible for the omission of duties which they cannot perform out of the church, and for not joining the church in order that they might perform them.

7. *All the privileges of Christianity are identified with the church.*

The church is that body of which Christ is the Head—he has loved the church and given himself for it—he has promised that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it—it is the flock of which he is the Shepherd, for which he laid down his life, and to which it is the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom—he has appointed under-shepherds to feed that flock on earth, and he has in reserve for it verdant pastures and fountains of living waters in heaven. The boundless stores of his grace are pledged to the church, from which the highest glory is to accrue to himself, throughout all ages, world without end. And all those who are ultimately saved are the church of the first-born which are written in heaven: this is that glorious bride which he intends to present faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy. These privileges, indeed, have been procured for all men, and they are offered to the acceptance of all; but they can be appropriated by none except on the performance of such conditions as involve connection with the church. It is not for us to exclude from the kingdom of heaven all those who by insuperable obstacles are kept out of the church on earth; nor can we determine to what extent they may be made participants of the blessings of God's salvation in the present world. But we are very sure none have a right to claim any of those privileges, whether of grace here or glory hereafter, which are pledged and promised to the church of Christ, who will not unite themselves to its fellowship. So intimate is the connection between the church on earth and the church in heaven, that it is impossible to tell to which the sacred writers allude in some places where they speak of the kingdom of God—the city of God—the New Jerusalem, and the like. What is said of one will apply to the

other—the associations, engagements, and enjoyments of both being in many respects the same—in the grand essentials “the kingdoms are but one.” How strange that any man should promise himself a hearty welcome into the kingdom of glory, while he wilfully refuses to enter the kingdom of grace!

8. *The church is adapted to the social nature of man.*

Man was born for society—he must live in the midst of his species—he would perish in solitude. He sustains a thousand important relations to his fellow-creatures—in fact, the connections and dependencies of social life are beyond all computation. His religion, therefore, if it be adapted to his constitution, tendencies, and necessities, must be of a social character. He must not be bound up with his fellows in every thing else, and be sequestered from them in that which exceeds every thing else and which ought to interpenetrate every thing else—*his religion*. No, no: this must be social too—*emphatically* and obviously social. The way to heaven may be, it must be, narrow; nevertheless, it may be, and it is, the King’s highway, open and broad, giving ample room and verge enough for the whole world to walk abreast. Religion admits of companionship—it demands it—it cannot prosper without it—except in extreme and peculiar cases, it cannot *live* without it. Yet there is a seclusion in religion. Christians are chosen out of the world. They must not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers: they must come out from among them and be separate: they must have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness: they are admonished that the friendship of the world is enmity with God. 2 Cor. vi. 15–18; Eph. v. 8; Jas. iv. 4. This embargo is laid on association and friendship with the world, because such fellowship is perilous to our principles, character, reputation, and influence. “Evil communications corrupt good manners;” and “the companion of fools shall be destroyed.” Yet the social instincts of our nature are not obliterated, but rather quickened, strengthened, and developed by renewing

grace—they demand proper objects and lawful gratifications. They find both in the church of Christ. Our friendships are narrowed down and circumscribed, in order that they may be pure, and fervent, and satisfying, and safe, and durable. It is in the church where our best friends, our kindred dwell—in the communion of saints we realize the most suitable and delightful fellowship. In accordance, therefore, with the social conditions of our nature, Christianity brings us into a *society*, not into a *solitude*: it knows nothing of a philosophical sequestration, a stoical independence; but it fosters genial sentiments in the bosom, attracts us to the general assembly and church of the first-born, and extinguishes the proud, or moody, or selfish feelings which render us unfit for the society of the holy and happy. “Now, therefore,” says the apostle, “ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.” Eph. ii. 19–22. Verily, those who think they can be Christians without showing that they believe in “the holy catholic church, the communion of saints,” must be either destitute of the social instincts common to our species, or else they must entertain very different views of Christianity from those which were entertained by its inspired expounders.

9. *All the primitive converts to Christianity joined the church.*

We challenge any man to produce an exception. The absurd notion that any one may be a disciple of Christ, without confessing him before the world by uniting with his followers, did not obtain in the apostolic age. No sooner had the three thousand gladly received the word at Pentecost, than they were added to the church by baptism; “and they continued steadfastly in the apostles’

doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and prayers." Acts ii. 41, 42. And when, shortly after, the number was swelled to five thousand, it is said, "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul." Acts iv. 32. When the Samaritans embraced Christianity, they were baptized and incorporated into a church—when the eunuch believed, he was baptized and became the nucleus of a church in his heathen home—when Saul was converted, he was baptized and admitted into the fellowship of the faithful—so were Cornelius and his friends—so were Lydia and the jailer—so were all the converts to the faith of Christ, in all parts of the world. No one was considered a disciple that did not take upon him the badge of discipleship. And when the love of any of them waxed cold, and they forsook the assemblies of the saints, this abandonment of the church was considered an exponent of their abandonment of Christianity, and they were mourned over and dealt with accordingly. We do not wonder at the attraction which the church possessed for those Christian believers. See how highly the Hebrew saints esteemed church-membership under their inferior dispensation. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another"—they "took sweet counsel together and walked to the house of God in company." When deprived of the privilege of repairing to the sanctuary, how pathetically did they deplore the deprivation: "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God! My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me; for I had gone with the multitude: I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy-day." "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house. For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the

tents of wickedness." And when their circumstances were changed, how joyful were they: "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go up to the house of the Lord. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee." Ps. xlii. lxxxiv. cxii. As the New Testament church is in every respect an improvement on the Old, it is not to be wondered at that Christian believers should exhibit at least as much devotion to the church, and place as high an estimate upon the privilege and duty of membership, as the faithful in ancient times. The primitive Christians loved the church with an intense affection—they loved its divine Founder—they loved its doctrines, its discipline, its ordinances, its ministry, its membership—they were ready to lay down their lives for the brethren. They provoked one another to love and good works—they confessed their faults one to another and prayed one for another—they exhorted one another—they bore one another's burdens—they consoled one another in trouble—they distributed to the necessity of saints—they did good unto all men, especially unto them who were of the household of faith. When they visited one another their mutual love was inflamed, and their comfort increased. When they were separated they sorrowed most of all because they should see one another's face no more. How exquisite is that passage in St. Paul: "God that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; and not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me, so that I rejoiced the more." 2 Cor. vii. 6, 7. How touching is the account of the interview between the great apostle and his strange brethren who came out as far as Appii Forum and the Three Taverns, to meet the illustrious prisoner and his companions in travel, as they approached the city of Rome—"whom when Paul saw," says the historian, "he thanked God, and took courage."

Acts xxviii. Surely, if the inspired apostles and their associates considered connection with the church essential to the embracement and practice of Christianity—if they derived so much profit and pleasure from the communion of saints—it does not require much sagacity to predict what will be our fortune if we proclaim our independence of the church. But whatsoever progress we may have made in this enlightened age, the primitive Christians had not advanced an inch beyond the “proverbial philosophy” of the elder times: “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but wo to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two be together, then they have heat; but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” Eccles. iv. 9–12. The address of Moses to Hobab is pertinent to everybody in every age: “Come thou with us, and we will do thee good, for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.”

10. *The church needs accessions.*

The general church, which is designed to embrace the whole world within its pale, does not at present comprehend more than a small fraction of the human family. It is melancholy to see three-fourths of our species under the tyranny of pagan and Mohammedan impostures—far, far from the church of Christ. But how painful, how mortifying, to see millions in Christendom itself, living out of the church, and wellnigh as unconcerned about it as if they had never heard of the divine institution! Christendom must be Christianized before an infidel world can be converted to Christ. The church needs accessions at home to strengthen her forces, so that she may be able to extend her conquests abroad. But every particular church, or Christian society, needs addition to its membership. The church near which you reside needs the encouragement which would accrue from admissions to its communion. It has long mourned because so few come



to its solemn feasts : it is for you and others like you to turn that mourning into joy. It needs the sympathy and moral support which *numbers alone* can furnish. It needs your personal services and financial assistance. It could do a great deal more with you than it can do without you ; and therefore you hinder the cause of Christ, you "rob God," by withholding yourself from membership in the church. You could do a great deal of good by your church-membership—you could accomplish thereby what without it you cannot accomplish, and what no one else can accomplish in your stead ; and as every man is bound to do all the good he can while he is in the world, it is clear that connection with the church is binding upon you by the most weighty obligation. Arguments drawn from the advantages which would accrue to you from the communion of saints may, perhaps, be considered by you of the greatest force, and they are confessedly important, beyond all estimate—yet it seems to us miserably selfish, ineffably mean, not to be influenced by considerations having reference to the welfare of others—relatives, neighbours, the world at large—the present generation and posterity too—for, by the appointment of Heaven, no man liveth to himself. "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick ; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Matt. v. 14-16.

Some try to parry the reasons by which the obligation of church-membership is ascertained and enforced. Let us see with what success.

1. *It is suggested that religion is a matter of individual concern.*

So it is. What then ? It is a social affair also. It has its internal and external relations—its private and its public side. If the church so absorbed the individual as

to do away with his personality, the argument insinuated by the suggestion would bear to be plainly stated—it would have force. But this is not the case. The church is not a corporation to transact business for its members in such wise as that they are not held to personal responsibility; and no one, who derives his information on this matter from the Bible, can for one moment entertain the preposterous notion.

2. *To maintain the necessity of church-membership is to maintain that all who are not members of the church, including the heathen world, will be damned.*

Were this the case, we should question the soundness of the principle and suspect a fallacy in the reasoning on which it rests. But this is not the case. We shall be damned if we have not faith in Christ, because we have the necessary means and facilities for its exercise—not so *the heathen*, who have them not. They will be held accountable for nothing beyond their capacity of performance: their responsibility holds within that measure. Precisely the same rule of judgment obtains in the case of those to whom “the happy gates” of the church have been thrown open, inviting their entrance. Wo be to them if they enter not.

3. *Some who are not members of the church are as good as some that are.*

Admitted. There are some “moralists” out of the church that are no worse than some that are in it—so of hypocrites, and other sinners, who, except they repent, will all likewise perish. But it will scarcely be said that the world is as good as the church; or, if this be said, we meet the assertion with a flat denial. We do not, indeed, deny that there are pseudo-catholic and national churches—Romish, Grecian, and Anglican—in which the church and the world are identified—in such cases, of course, the church is as bad as the world, and the world is as good as the church. But it is not our business to defend such monstrosities: we are not bound to plead for

Baal. We can show you many a branch of the true catholic church which would give place, no, not for an hour to your saints of the world : some that are in highest repute among their fellows would have to mend their manners very materially before they would be welcome to the table of the Lord. Instead of being as good as the church, the world is made the receptacle of all the detected hypocrites, apostates, and all others "that offend and them which do iniquity," and that cannot be tolerated in the communion of saints.

4. *Others decline church-membership, and why may not I?*

Because you may not follow a multitude to do evil or to decline that which is good—because others will try to keep themselves in countenance while neglecting their duty, from your example, as you do from the example of others—because the course pursued by others is not the rule of action for you—and because the more delinquents there are, the greater reason that you should make one the number less.

5. *The church can do well enough without me.*

We do not suppose that the church catholic will become extinct, if you fail to give it your support. Nor, perhaps, will any particular Christian society perish for that reason—albeit the influence of one man has kept alive many a church. You may not be of that consequence. Yet you may become so influential as that the church may do a great deal better with you than without you. Besides, you cannot do well enough without the church. That is certain. And then, if *you* can use this plea, so can *everybody else*; and if everybody else were to do so, what would become of the church? You consider it a cross to confess Christ before men—you ought to blush for so considering it—but call it a cross if you will—is no one to bear ~~the~~ the cross but Simon? are only a few bound to this service, and all the rest allowed to go free? What then does the Saviour mean, when he says, "He that taketh

not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me?" Matt. x. 38. Your capacity of service in the cause of Christ may correspond more with your verbal, voluntary humility than with your inwardly cherished and ill-concealed pride, yet small as it is, you are to use it, not neglect it—it is at your peril that you take your talent, and because you have but one, put it in a napkin, and hide it in the earth.

6. *The obligations imposed by church-membership are too burdensome.*

Burdensome as they may be, you are as much bound to assume them as anybody else; and nobody is at liberty to decline them, as they are not of human, but of divine origination. It is proper for you to count the cost of joining the church, not, however, to determine thereby whether or not you will join it—that you are bound to do, cost what it may—but to prepare yourself for all the responsibilities which will devolve upon you, as a member of this important society. You are not wanted as an honorary member—there are too many drones already in the hive. We dare say you consider the services proper to church-membership burdensome and irksome enough; but there is a way of making them light and agreeable. Let your heart be set right by divine grace—let the love of Christ constrain you—the result will be you will love the cause of Christ, the people of Christ, and instead of sneaking out of his service, you will be ready to say, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" You will not wait to be *pressed* into the service, but you will enter as *volunteers*. "Thy people shall be *willing* in the day of thy power." You will know what David meant, when he said, "The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up." The state of feeling prerequisite to the due discharge of the obligations of church-membership, though it will not make them all equally pleasant, will keep us from considering any of them burdensome; and though some of them may involve sacrifice, yet being important to ourselves or to others, we shall not murmur, but rather re-

joice, that the necessity of meeting them has been laid upon us.

7. *I am not good enough to join the church.*

Have you found out exactly how good a man must be before he is eligible to membership in the church? Must his character be immaculate, and his life perfect? If so, Christ's flock will be a little one indeed. Do you accept this faithful saying, that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners?" do you desire to be saved by him from your sins? are you willing to be guided by his counsel and governed by his laws? If so, bad as you may consider yourself, and bad as you may really be, you are as welcome to the church, and as bound to be a member of it, as any saint on earth. You need tuition: the church is the school of Christ—will you keep out of it until you have acquired elsewhere the knowledge which is *there alone* imparted? You are sick, and need prescriptions and nursing: the church is a hospital—will you wait until you are well before you allow yourself to be taken to it? It is the business of the church to afford protection and support to tender infancy and tottering age: it is its province to direct the mind of the anxious inquirer, to lead the humble penitent to the cross, to carry forward the imperfect believer to higher attainments, as well as to take care of those who have gone on to perfection. None are excluded from the varied advantages which accrue from the fellowship of the church, but those who exclude themselves: nothing more reputable than obstinacy or ignorance can make you of that number. You are the purchased property of the Lord Jesus Christ: he has bought you with his precious blood: you already belong to him. Accordingly, you have all your life been the recipient of his preventing grace—the subject of the Spirit's strivings. This is as certain as that you have a being on earth. You know that you are to be "justified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," and not by your own works and deservings. You are to come to him just as you are—with

what light he has already imparted—exercising what little faith you have, until it shall strengthen, and grow, and bring peace to your soul. Do you think that the church is more holy than the Holy Ghost?—that his grace is less sacred than the water which represents it? Surely not. If then you have not been baptized, we say to you as Ananias said to an awakened sinner—Saul of Tarsus—“And now why tarriest thou? arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord?” And if you have been baptized, you ought to join the church, as the first step toward redeeming your baptismal obligations. Is the church more sacred and less approachable than its glorious Head? Is any man who is willing to part with his sins and live according to the tenor of the gospel, invited and commanded to come to Christ, without waiting to make himself better before he comes, and yet forbidden to come to that ordinance which is but the shadow of Christ—the mere hem of his garment! No, no: as you must come to Christ just as you are, so just as you are you must come to his church—the most likely place in which to find him. “This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.” If then you feel yourself a helpless sinner, you had better go to Christ without delay; and how can you find him with greater readiness than by seeking him in the use of those ordinances in which he reveals himself to the humble soul?

8. *Many who belong to the church are disreputable and wicked.*

The church then is not good enough for you—you are too good for the church. But you seem to forget that bad as it is, Jesus Christ is still the Head of it—it is God’s recognized agent for the regeneration of the world, and nearly or quite all the good people in Christendom are members of it. Disreputable as it is, your reputation might not suffer much by connection with it: wicked as it is, your character might not be greatly vitiated by communion with it. It is a great deal better than the society

to which you now belong. In the purer branches of the church—those alone which concern us at present—you may find, with a few wise, mighty, and noble, in the world's estimation, many poor, uncultivated, and unrenowned, whom you may contemptuously consider *disreputable*; but the *wicked* you will not find—at least, they are not there by the welcome or warrant of the church. Some, indeed, may practise hypocrisy for a time, and deceive the very elect; but from the very nature of the case such instances are always exceptional, and, when detected, the base pretenders are transferred to the communion to which they belong, and from which, if bad company is your aversion, you would do well to make a speedy escape.

9. *So many sects claim to be the church, it is hard to make a choice.*

There is some force in that observation. It is very much weakened, however, by the fact that it is not necessary to consider any one of them a true church to the exclusion of all the rest. Not one of them by itself is the catholic church; but all of them—with the exception of those who are utterly and obviously corrupt—are branches of the catholic church. Some of them are purer and more evangelical than others; but in any of them the essentials of a church may be found, and the communion of saints realized. You may be a good churchman under a prelatical, presbyterial, or independent government, or under a mixed form, like the Methodist—no specific platform being laid down in the Bible. As to doctrine, they all appeal to the Word of God for authority; and of what use is your reason to you if you cannot compare their respective confessions with the acknowledged standard, and make your election accordingly? Only resolve that you will belong to the church of Christ, and you will not find much difficulty in determining to which branch you will be attached. Be serious, candid, and thorough in your investigations—let no worldly interests sway you—fix upon that communion, whatever may be its reputo

among men, which you verily believe comes nearest to the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, that in which you think you may get and do the most good—and be not troubled about “doubtful disputations.” The choice which you make now does not preclude a change of church relation hereafter: better go the whole round of evangelical Christendom than have no place at all in the household of faith.

10. *There is danger of backsliding and disgracing the church.*

So there is. But you forget that you are disgracing the church by not joining it—this omission on your part is a reflection on the church. If you are so concerned for the reputation of the church, why do you let fear and shame and pride keep you out of its pale? You were perhaps initiated into the church in infancy. Why have you broken away from its communion? Is this apostasy, which you are perpetuating day after day, no disgrace to the church? Does it not strengthen the hands of the wicked and make the hearts of the righteous sad? There is not a man in the church who is not liable to fall and disgrace the cause of Christ; but suppose all who are now members had been influenced as you profess to be by this consideration, where would now be the church? The gates of hell would have prevailed against it—the disgrace of utter extinction would have long since been its fate. Had this principle been acted on from the beginning, the church would never have had a being. It does not require much sagacity to detect the folly of such reasoning, or to discover the proper mode of maintaining the reputation of the church. Connect yourself with it in good faith—bring to its support the influence of your name, talents, property, position, prayers—and give yourself no morbid concern about its reputation, or the contingencies by which it may be affected. You can be faithful unto death if you choose—there is no necessity of your disgracing either yourself or the church—to refuse to join it because such a mishap is not impossible is a little too absurd.



If there be any other objections to church-membership, they have not come to our notice. We suppose, therefore, there are none—none more weighty than those we have examined, and any less weighty could not very well be put into the balance.

We are very sure no candid man will say that they have strength enough to set aside the duty in question, enforced by such considerations as the divine origin of the church—the cost of its establishment—its miraculous perpetuation—its communion with Christ, its exalted Head—its province and prerogative as the preserver and propagator of Christianity—its intimate and inseparable relation to Christian duty—the privileges it involves—the deep response which it meets in the social instincts of our nature—the illustrious precedents of primitive and apostolic times—and the vehement calls for accessions to its ranks on account of the smallness of its membership. Such considerations not only establish the duty of church-membership, but also demonstrate the paramount importance of the obligation. We are sure that no one not a member of the church can weigh those reasons with an unprejudiced, sincere, and earnest mind, without forming the resolution of Ruth, so finely paraphrased and appropriated by the poet :

People of the living God,  
I have sought the world around,  
Paths of sin and sorrow trod,  
Peace and comfort nowhere found :  
Now to you my spirit turns—  
Turns, a fugitive unblest :  
Brethren, where your altar burns,  
O ! receive me into rest.  
Lonely I no longer roam,  
Like the cloud, the wind, the wave :  
Where you dwell shall be my home,  
Where you die shall be my grave :  
Mine the God whom you adore,  
Your Redeemer shall be mine :  
Earth can fill my soul no more,  
Every idol I resign.

## WHY ARE YOU A METHODIST?

---

A DIALOGUE BETWEEN A HIGH-CHURCH EPISCOPAL  
CLERGYMAN AND A METHODIST.

---

*High-church Clergyman.* Good morning, Mr. Smith : I hope you are well.

*Methodist.* Good morning, Mr. Jones : I am glad to see you. Take a chair

*C.* I have taken the liberty to call on you to know why it is that I never see you at church.

*M.* Why, Mr. Jones, I suppose the reason is, I do not attend your church, and you do not attend mine—at least, I have never seen you there.

*C.* Your church, Mr. Smith—what do you mean? I do not understand you.

*M.* Do you not know that I am a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church?

*C.* I am surprised, Mr. Smith, that you should call the Methodist Society *a church*. Mr. Wesley never did.

*M.* You are mistaken, Mr. Jones. Mr. Wesley not only took the lead in the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, in 1784, but also expressed his warm approval of the manner in which Dr. Coke and his brethren carried out his instructions. In a letter to Mr. John Stretton, dated February 25, 1785, he says, "Last autumn, Dr. Coke sailed from England, and is now visiting the flock in the midland provinces of America, and settling them *on the New-Testament plan*, to which they all willingly and joyfully conform, being all united, as by

one Spirit, so in one body. I trust they will no more want such pastors as are after God's own heart." Such pastors, Mr. Jones, we have still among us.

*C.* I believe, Mr. Smith, that if Mr. Wesley were now alive he would disown your *church*, as you call it; for you have sadly departed from his precepts and doctrines.

*M.* I think you are again mistaken. Next to the Bible, we prize the writings of Mr. Wesley, and we prize them so highly because of their general conformity to the principles of inspired truth.

*C.* O yes! I know that you almost idolize Wesley, though you have disobeyed his instructions in schismatically separating yourselves from that church which he considered the purest in the world.

*M.* We have not separated from any church—we never belonged to the Church of England; and the Protestant Episcopal Church in this country was not in existence when the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized.

*C.* Still, the Protestant Episcopal Church sustains a filial relation to the Church of England, which is a pure branch of the holy Catholic church; and remember, the church bears no man's name. She is the spouse of Christ, one and undefiled. All who are separate from her show that they are not on the true foundation. By speaking of Luther, Wesley, and others as their founders, they confess their human origin.

*M.* That sounds very much like Popery, Mr. Jones. Indeed, the Papist says that your *society* is no *church*; and that you, sir, are a heretic and a schismatic—as much so as any “irreverent dissenter” you affect to despise. As to names, you yourself are called a Protestant, and so is your church, which identifies you with the Lutheran Reformers, and if, as some of your brethren propose, you were to change your denominational title and assume that which has been suggested by the Episcopal dissenters of Scotland, “The Reformed Catholic Church,” you still acknowledge some relation to the Reformers of the sixteenth century, unless you consider the Oxford movement a new Reformation. In the former case you

are "Cranmerians," in the latter, "Puseyites," as much so as any of the "schismatics" are Lutherans, Calvinists, or Wesleyans.

C. It was perhaps unfortunate that the fathers of the church in America adopted the Protestant style. They ought to have assumed the simple title of "The Church in America," or "The Anglo-American Church." We should prefer the title "Catholic," but that is monopolized by the Romish schism.

M. But the Papists are obliged to call themselves *Roman* Catholics, for the sake of distinction, as other communions call themselves Catholics. Your brethren in England appreciate this difficulty, hence they call the Oxford series of reprints, "The Library of *Anglo*-Catholic Theology." Thus, it may be seen, that if names are an evil, they are a necessary evil; as indeed they have been ever since the days of the father who said that Christian was his name, and Catholic his surname. He used the word "Catholic" to denote what he believed to be a true and complete, as distinguished from a spurious or a maimed, Christianity.

C. But Wesley would not have a people called after his name. I think I have read that he reproved some of your old preachers for calling a school that they built after their own names.

M. You are quite correct, sir. And it should be known that he wished to avoid giving his spiritual children any name at all. His hope was that they would all live and die, as many of the first of them did, in the communion of the Church of England; and he therefore called them simply "The United Societies." They were at first called Methodists in derision; but the name soon took, and became universal. Still he carefully abstained from giving them any name himself. To the last he spoke of them as "the people called Methodists;" both in the titles of books published for their use, and in the legal instrument by which the British Conference is constituted, he adhered rigidly to that form of speech. When, in process of time there came to be more than one body

of "people called Methodists," and some further distinctive epithet was necessary, the term "Wesleyan" was assumed by that Conference to describe the societies continuing in the connection which he had founded; just as the surname of Catholic became necessary to those who before had been called simply Christians. I mention this to show that it is by no act of that great and good man that they bear his name, but rather by the force of circumstances operating against his inclination. We do not call ourselves "Wesleyans" in this country, although we agree with Wesley in our views of gospel truth.

*C.* You have convicted yourself again, by saying it was Wesley's hope that his societies would live and die in the established church. Why have they not done so, but because, in the true spirit of self-will, they will not listen to his advice and warnings? Did he not protest that his preachers had no right to administer the sacraments; and that for them to attempt it would be to follow the example of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram?

*M.* Indeed, sir, I do not think he did. You misunderstand him.

*C.* No, I do not. I will bring you the very words he uses to-morrow.

*M.* I believe, sir, I am in possession of his writings: if you can find the passages, we will read them together.

*C.* Well, then, here is the first:—

"We believe it would not be right for us to administer either baptism or the Lord's supper, unless we had a commission so to do from those bishops whom we apprehend to be in succession from the apostles.

"We believe there is, and always was, in every Christian church, an outward priesthood ordained by Jesus Christ, and an outward sacrifice offered therein by men authorized to act as ambassadors for Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

"We believe that the threefold order of ministers is not only authorized by apostolic institution, but also by the written word."—*Journal, Works, (American Edition,)* vol. iii. p. 362.

Here is another equally plain passage: he says, "They" (the Methodist preachers) "no more take upon them to be priests than to be kings. They take not upon them to administer the sacraments, an honour peculiar to the priests of God."—*Works*, vol. v. p. 159.

And again he addresses the preachers in these words:—

"In 1744, all the Methodist preachers had their first Conference. But none of them dreamed, that the being called to preach gave them any right to administer sacraments. One of our first rules was given to each preacher, 'You are to do that part of the work which we appoint.' But what work was this? Did we ever appoint you to administer sacraments—to exercise the priestly office? Such a design never entered into our mind—it was the farthest from our thoughts; and if any preacher had taken such a step, we should have looked upon it as a palpable breach of this rule, and, consequently, as a recontamination of our connection.

"I wish all of you, who are vulgarly termed Methodists, would seriously consider what has been said. And particularly you whom God hath commissioned to call sinners to repentance. It does by no means follow from hence, that ye are commissioned to BAPTIZE, or to administer the LORD'S SUPPER. Ye never dreamed of this, for ten or twenty years after ye began to preach. Ye did not, then, like Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, 'seek the priesthood also.' Ye knew, 'No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.' O contain yourselves within your own bounds!"—*Works*, vol. ii. pp. 542, 543.

*M.* Indeed, sir, these are strong words, and sound very much like what is now called Puseyism. Don't you think that any clergyman who should preach so now would be called a Puseyite?

*C.* Very likely he would; for that word is much in fashion just now. But it only describes a set of opinions which have been held more or less extensively in the church ever since the Reformation; and there is nothing really new in the teaching of Dr. Pusey and his friends.

*M.* So I should suppose, sir; for I find in Mr. Wesley's writings many passages which show that he held the same opinions nearly a hundred years ago. And he carried out his opinions into practice too, just as some clergymen do now. For instance, he accounted all the ministers of the continental Protestant churches as mere laymen, because they were not episcopally ordained, and repelled a pious Lutheran minister in Savannah from the Lord's table, as unbaptized. He afterward rebaptized an adult person in London, who had received baptism from a dissenting minister. In short, he declares that for some years he enforced the rubrics at the peril of his life; and that his views on certain points of church order were so rigid that he would almost have thought it a sin to save a soul, if it were done out of the church. I do not much wonder, therefore, at his saying such things as you have now read. But he did not always hold these sentiments. Indeed, if I am not mistaken, he avows very different, and even opposite opinions, in other parts of his writings. The threefold order of ministers, and the lineal succession from the apostles, of which he speaks in the first extract you read, he declares to be groundless notions. He even calls the latter "a fable," in the following passage:—"I firmly believe, I am a scriptural *ἐπίσκοπος*, *episcopus*, as much as any man in England or Europe. For the uninterrupted succession I know to be a fable, which no man ever did or can prove."—*Works*, vol. vii. p. 312. This you see, sir, flatly contradicts the quotation you made.

*C.* It is indeed a strange contradiction. How is it to be accounted for?

*M.* Very easily. Mr. Wesley's opinions underwent an entire change on this point; and the means by which that change was in part, if not chiefly, effected, was the reading of two works written by distinguished *churchmen*.

*C.* Was it so really? I had no idea of this.

*M.* Perhaps not, sir; and I would fain hope that this is the case of many of your clerical brethren, who busy themselves just now in the circulating of extracts from his writings, with the view of persuading the Methodists

that they are departing from the principles of their founder.

C. But surely Mr. Wesley was a very inconsistent person.

M. No: that I cannot admit. He only changed his opinions upon better information, as every other man may do, and has a right to do. If his conduct at any given time was at variance with the opinions which he *then* held, he certainly was inconsistent; but not otherwise. It is an easy thing to select detached passages from the fourteen large volumes of his works, which were published at intervals during the space of half a century, and by comparing them together, to make a show of contradiction. Observe the several *times* of writing, and the seeming inconsistency is at an end. Pray can you find the date of the first passage you quoted?

C. It is found in his Journal for the year 1745.

M. You will observe it is in a letter addressed to his brother-in-law, Mr. Hall. This letter was written December 30th of that year. Now let us turn to the second extract. Where is that found, sir?

C. In one of his "Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion."

M. Yes, sir, in the third part, at the close of which, as in the former case, you find the date December 18th, 1745. So that these two passages were written within a fortnight of each other. And in the course of the next month his opinions on the subject in hand were greatly shaken. In his Journal, under date of January 20th, 1746, he writes: "I set out for Bristol. On the road I read over Lord King's 'Account of the Primitive Church.' *In spite of the vehement prejudice of my education, I was ready to believe that this was a fair and impartial draught; but if so, it would follow that bishops and presbyters are (essentially) of one order.*"

From this opinion of the essential equality of bishops and presbyters he never afterward varied. Writing a letter under date September 10th, 1784, when he adopted measures for the organization of the Methodist Episcopal



Church, he says, "Lord King's 'Account of the Primitive Church' convinced me, many years ago, that bishops and presbyters are the same order, and consequently have the same right to ordain."—*Works*, vol. vii. p. 311.

C. Did you ever hear that Lord King's book was answered, and with so much success, that he himself was convinced of his error, and espoused the opinion he had opposed?

M. I have heard a report of that sort, but do not know on what foundation it rests. Nor does Mr. Wesley ever mention the answer: from which I conclude, either that he never saw it, or that it failed to convince him. But that is nothing to the present purpose. The next book to which he refers, as having contributed much to the change of his views, was the work of a more eminent man than even the theological lord chancellor. He mentions it in several places. Thus in a letter to a friend, who taxed him with contradicting his subscription to the twenty-third article, by allowing lay-preachers: "They" (the Methodist clergy) "subscribed it in the simplicity of their hearts, when they firmly believed none but episcopal ordination valid. But Bishop Stillingfleet has since *fully convinced them*, this was an *entire mistake*." (Vol. vii. p. 301.) So in another letter: "This opinion" (namely, that the episcopal form of church government is prescribed in Scripture) "which I once zealously espoused, I have been heartily ashamed of ever since I read Bishop Stillingfleet's 'Irenicon.' I think he has unanswerably proved that neither Christ nor his apostles prescribe any particular form of church government; and that the plea of divine right for diocesan episcopacy was never heard of in the primitive church." (Vol. vii. p. 284.) And yet once more: "Read Bishop Stillingfleet's 'Irenicon,' or any impartial history of the ancient church, and I believe you will think as I do. I verily believe I have as good a right to ordain as to administer the Lord's supper." (*Life of C. Wesley*, p. 746.) You see, sir, that it is not quite fair to quote as against the Methodists,

opinions of Mr. Wesley which he not only ceased to hold, but repeatedly and plainly disowned.

*C.* It was in the late years of his life that he published the last extract I read to you. In fact, it was only a few months before his death. The sermon from which it is taken is dated May 4th, 1789, and I find he died March 2d, 1791. So that here we have his last words, and they are express against his preachers administering the sacraments. By doing this he says they "renounce the first principle of Methodism."

*M.* I am glad, sir, to find that you confine yourself to his words. Some of your brethren have acted very dishonourably in this respect. It is not long since I saw a tract in which the passage you have quoted was introduced, as containing Mr. Wesley's "views upon this vitally important question, namely, as to the validity of the sacraments administered by persons not ordained by a bishop;" whereas the most casual reader may see that the *validity* of such sacraments is not mentioned, nor even hinted at, throughout the sermon; the sole question under discussion being, whether Methodist preachers might, or might not, administer them.

*C.* Exactly so. That is the very point, and that point he decides against them. "Ye did not, at the beginning," says he, "like Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, seek the priesthood also. O, contain yourselves within your own bounds! Be content with preaching the gospel." Can words be plainer? How you can profess to venerate his memory, while you act so completely at variance with his injunctions, I cannot tell. Surely if he ranks the preachers who presume to administer with Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, he would condemn you, the receiver, as a partaker of their sins.

*M.* Softly, sir, softly. We will turn to the sermon, if you please, though I fear my explanations will tire you.

*C.* Go on, sir, and do not be afraid.

*M.* Suppose, in the first place, remembering the date of the sermon, we turn to the Journals. We shall there find that on August 1st, 1785, he set apart three "well-

tried preachers to minister in Scotland," as the year preceding he had ordained others for this country. From other sources we learn that early in the year 1789, he ordained three other ministers, without sending them out of England. Their names were Alexander Mather, Thomas Rankin, and Henry Moore. The last of these has published a copy of the letters of orders given him on this occasion. They are dated February 27th, 1789, and countersigned James Creighton, Peard Dickenson, presbyters of the Church of England, and read as follows:—

"Know all men, by these presents, that I, John Wesley, late Fellow of Lincoln College, in Oxford, did, on the day of the date hereof, by the imposition of my hands and prayer, (being assisted by other ordained ministers,) set apart Henry Moore, for the office of a presbyter in the church of God; a man whom I judge qualified to feed the flock of Christ, and to administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper, according to the usage of the Church of England; and as such I do hereby recommend him to all whom it may concern. In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and seal. JOHN WESLEY."

Now, sir, let me ask, can you imagine that the passage you have read from the sermon was intended to prohibit these persons from administering the sacraments, or to deny, even by implication, the validity of the sacraments administered by them? Would it be consistent with common sense to suppose that he intended to revoke these powers as soon as they were bestowed?

C. I can hardly think that; but such conduct is very strange, to say the least of it.

M. So it no doubt appears to you, sir, as well as to many others who have never considered the subject fully. To those who have, it appears perfectly consistent both with Mr. Wesley's avowed principles, and with his method of proceeding from the beginning. And this I will endeavour to show you. It must be borne in mind, however, that principles and plans are very distinct things. A principle may be carried out in one mode at one time, and in another mode at another time. And further, a

firm adherence to *principles* may even compel a man to change his *plans* as circumstances change. And this is precisely the case of Mr. Wesley. His principles cannot be better stated than in his own words: "I have one point in view—to promote, so far as I am able, vital, practical religion; and, by the grace of God, to beget, preserve, and increase the life of God in the souls of men." — *Works*, vol. vii. p. 275. "I look upon all the world as my parish; thus far I mean, that, in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty, to declare unto all, that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation. This is the work which I know God has called me to; and sure I am that his blessing attends it. His servant I am; and as such am employed according to the plain direction of his word, 'As I have opportunity, doing good unto all men.'" You will please to recollect, sir, that he began his public life upon the plan of preaching, at every opportunity, in such churches as were open to him; but when the churches were closed against him, his principles led him to preach in the fields and other unconsecrated places. His plan alone was changed, the time and place of preaching being regulated by circumstances.

Again: he began upon the plan of seeking the help of the clergy only; but where he could not find clergymen to assist him, his principle drove him to accept the help of laymen. His "vehement prejudice of education" rendered both these arrangements most unpleasant to him; but his sense of duty, his fixed adherence to principle, enabled him to surmount the unpleasantness. So, upon the same principle, when some of the societies would otherwise have been deprived of the sacraments, he authorized a few of his preachers to administer them. But he never deviated unnecessarily from the order of the established church; and hence arose his seeming inconsistency in this matter. He appointed some preachers to administer the sacraments where he found it absolutely necessary to do so; but he positively forbade those whom he had not appointed to undertake the work. And thi-

is the real drift of the sermon from which you quote. It is an absolute prohibition of the administration of the sacraments by the unordained preachers; and is, so far, a striking testimony to the manner in which he strove to soften that separation from the establishment which he saw could not be wholly avoided. This view of the case is strengthened when we read, as we do in Myles's "History," (8vo., 1813, p. 175,) that when he ordained these preachers to administer in England, he "strongly advised them that, according to his example, they should continue united to the established church, so far as the blessed work in which they were engaged would permit." So, whether I look at the small number of persons to whom he gave this power, or at the advice which he gave them as to the exercise of it, or at the large number of those to whom he refused it, I see plain proof of his consistency throughout. Such was his love for the established church, that he would not depart from it further than was absolutely necessary. But so strong and fixed was his determination to "seek first the kingdom of God,"—so closely did he adhere to the *principle* of promoting vital, practical religion, at all costs and hazards—that he was willing for its sake to sacrifice the dearest object of his affections, the established church itself.

C. You have certainly put a better construction upon his sermon than it carries at first sight; but your general argument is faulty in the extreme. It assumes two things: first, that there was an actual necessity for the steps taken by Mr. Wesley; and, secondly, that religion could be better promoted by his irregularities than otherwise; and these I can by no means admit.

M. And yet, sir, they are capable of easy proof. Take the last mentioned first. Supposing him to have been strictly regular, he could have preached (ordinarily) but in one parish, and there only in the church: he could have used no extemporary prayer, and formed no societies. The parish in which he might, and probably would, have settled, had he been so minded, was Epworth in Lincolnshire, the population of which, in his days, was two thou-

sand. Had he continued there, what would thousands situated in distant parts of the country, have known of him? And, except through him, what probability was there that they would have known any thing of vital godliness? Humanly speaking, none whatever. There were other clergymen, contemporary with him, who were pious and regular, and found fault with his irregularities. I allude to Mr. Adam, of Wintringham, Mr. Walker, of Truro, and Mr. Venn, of Huddersfield. What am I the better, at this distance of time and place, for all their regular labours? They might have lived in the planet Venus for all the good which I have received from them; while the irregular Fellow of Lincoln College has been the instrument, in the hand of God, of turning me and mine from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that we might receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified. A blessed irregularity this, sir!

C. But we are not to do evil that good may come. You know that order is as necessary in the church as any where else; if, indeed, it is not more so; and if every man is to be at liberty to break the bounds, and go where he pleases, the church will be involved in perpetual confusion. This you yourselves practically acknowledge; for you have a discipline of your own, and, as I have heard, enforce it strictly. If any man attempt to infringe your rules, you punish him: why then do you praise Wesley for having transgressed the rules of his church?

M. I thank you for that question, sir, because it leads us directly to the next subject. We do acknowledge the necessity of discipline in the church, and, I hope, show by our practice in administering it constantly, that we entertain a high sense of its value. But the case of Mr. Wesley must not be tried by ordinary rules. The state of things in the established church when he began his course was widely different from what it is at present, and required extraordinary measures. I think it deserves to be mentioned, that, as Mr. Wesley was never beneficed, he could not, in your sense of the word, "break bounds;" but ad-

mitting him to have been, in the fullest sense, under the laws of the church, we can make out as clear a case of necessity as ever was pleaded to justify the infraction of positive laws, since the world began. And this remark applies equally to the first irregular steps which Mr. Wesley took, such as field-preaching, and the formation of societies, and to the last, the ordination of preachers to administer the sacraments. As to the moral condition of the church and nation at the commencement of his course, we do not ask you to take our word on that point; nor can you suspect either of the three witnesses whom I will now produce of a bias in our favour. Archbishop Secker declared in 1738, the year in which John Wesley was converted, that an open and professed disregard of religion had become the distinguishing character of the age; and that a torrent of impiety had set in, which, if it were not stopped, must become absolutely fatal to the country. Dr. Southey, reviewing the same period, avows his conviction that there never was less religious feeling in the country, either in the establishment or out of it, than when Wesley blew his trumpet and awakened those who slept. And Mr. William Gladstone, a justly distinguished modern writer, specifies as the characteristics of the times in question, "a rapid and great declension in the tone of all the doctrines of religion, a great increase of glaring abuse, and a miserable debasement of the entire religious action of the church." So that, in his view, "there lay before them" (that is, the Wesleys and their coadjutors) "a work which might, with some justice, be termed one of *general re-conversion*." I might enlarge these quotations, and add many others of the same purport, if it were necessary; but the fact which they declare admits of no dispute, except among those who are determined to believe what they wish to be true, in spite of all evidence to the contrary. If such was the state of the nation at the commencement of Wesley's labours, it was not to be expected that he would meet with much countenance from the clergy. They were generally adverse to his efforts; and not a few were open and bitter persecutors.

both of preachers and people. Many of the clergy positively refused the sacraments to the Methodists; and others were so wicked, that the people could not, with a good conscience, communicate with them, nor even go to hear them preach. Hence arose the necessity of providing the people with sacraments as well as with the word—a necessity which will be better illustrated by a few facts than by an hour's description. I will, therefore, lay before you a few extracts from the journal of Mr. Charles Wesley, which may serve for specimens of the manner in which the early Methodists were driven out from the church. I take Mr. Charles as a witness, because it is well known that he was in theory a high churchman all the days of his life. October 15th, 1739, he writes: "I waited, with my brother, on a minister at Bristol, about baptizing some of his parishioners. He complained heavily of the multitudes of our communicants who came to his church, and produced the canon against strangers. He could not admit as a reason for their coming to his church, that they had no sacrament at their own. I offered my assistance to lessen his trouble, but he declined it. He told us there were hundreds of new communicants last Sunday. We bless God for this cause of offence, and pray it may never be removed."—*Moore's Life of Wesley*, vol. i. p. 518.

"July 27th, 1740.—I heard a miserable sermon at Temple church, recommending religion as the most likely way to raise a fortune. After it, proclamation was made that all should depart who were not of the parish. While the shepherd was driving away the lambs, I stayed, suspecting nothing till the clerk came to me, and said, 'Mr. Beacher bids you go away; for he will not give you the sacrament.' I went to the vestry-door, and mildly desired Mr. Beacher to admit me. He asked, 'Are you of this parish?' I answered, 'Sir, you see that I am a clergyman.' Here, dropping his first pretence, he charged me with rebellion in expounding the Scripture without authority; and said, in express words, 'I repel you from the sacrament.' I answered, 'I cite you to answer this



before Jesus Christ at the day of judgment. This enraged him above measure : he called out, ' Here, take away this man ! ' The constables were ordered to attend, I suppose, lest the furious colliers should take the sacrament by force ; but I saved them the trouble of taking away ' this man,' and quietly retired."—*Whitehead's Life*, vol. i. p. 241.

"Bristol, August, 1740.—Mr. Carey's curate informed us that Mr. Carey had ordered him to repel my brother and me from the sacrament."—*Jackson's Life of C. Wesley*, p. 197, *American Edition*.

"May 25th, 1743.—In the afternoon, I came to the flock in Sheffield, who are as sheep among wolves ; the minister having so stirred up the people, that they are ready to tear the Methodists in pieces."—*Whitehead*, vol. i. p. 262.

"June 16th, 1743.—The mob of North Shields waited to salute me, with the minister at their head. He had got a man with a horn instead of a trumpet, and bade him blow and his companions shout."—*Ibid.* vol. i. p. 271.

"St. Ives, July 17th, 1743.—The mayor informed Mr. Wesley that the ministers were the principal authors of all the mischief. In their sermons they continually represented Mr. Wesley and the preachers as Popish emissaries ; and urged the enraged multitude to take all manner of means to stop them. The mayor has set the whole town against him by not giving us up to their fury. But he plainly told Mr. Hoblin that he would not be perjured to gratify any man's malice. He informed us that he had often heard Mr. Hoblin say that they ought to drive us away by blows, not by arguments."—*Ibid.* vol. i. p. 372.

"January 9th, 1747.—At Hainton he talked separately with the members of society, who were as sheep encompassed with wolves. The minister of the place had repelled them from the sacrament, and laboured to stir up all the town against them. It is probable they would have been worried to death but for the chief man of the

place, a professed Papist, who hindered these good Protestants from destroying their innocent brethren."—*Ibid.* vol. i. p. 308.

"February 24th, 1747.—He reached Devizes, where the curate's mob went in quest of him to several places, and broke open and ransacked the house where it was expected he would preach; the zealous curate meanwhile standing with them in the street, and dancing for joy. The next day a dreadful riot took place, and the lives of the Methodists were in great jeopardy for some hours."—*Ibid.* vol. i. p. 309.

Now, sir, let me ask you, is it likely that either at Sheffield, or at St. Ives, or at Devizes, or at Hainton, the Methodists would be very anxious to receive the Lord's supper at the hands of these persons?

*C.* It ought to be remembered that the unworthiness of the minister does not hinder the effect of the sacraments; and as this is the doctrine of the articles, the Wesleys were bound to teach it to their congregations.

*M.* So they did, sir. Nothing is more honourable to them than the manner in which they enforced this doctrine, under circumstances which, as you will admit, afforded a strong inducement to depart from it. Hear Mr. Charles Wesley: "Our poor colliers being repelled from the Lord's table by most of the Bristol ministers, I exhorted them notwithstanding to continue daily with one accord in the temple, where the wicked administrator can neither spoil the prayers, nor poison the sacrament." *Jackson's Life of C. Wesley*, p. 196.

*C.* That was consistent, certainly.

*M.* Yes, it was consistent with his professions as a *churchman*. But I doubt if it was consistent with the New Testament; which exhorts us to "try the spirits," to "beware of false prophets," and "to turn away from such as deny the power of godliness." However, his exhortations, whether consistent or inconsistent, were useless. The clergy drove the people from the Lord's table; and then, though not till then, the sacraments were administered to them in their own places of worship. The sepa-

ration of the Methodists from the established church rests, therefore, with the church itself. It was not the Methodists who withdrew from the communion of the church in the first instance, but the clergy who virtually excommunicated the Methodists. The first instance of separate communion was that which followed the repulsion of the Kingswood colliers from the Lord's table at a church in Bristol, in the manner related above. Mr. C. Wesley then declared that he would administer the Lord's supper to them in the midst of the wood, in the open air, if he could obtain no better accommodation. But they had a preaching-room in Kingswood; and there they met in peace to fulfil the solemn command of their Saviour, "Do this in remembrance of me." Had they not communicated by themselves, they could not have done so at all.

A striking passage from a letter addressed to Mr. C. Wesley, by John Bennett, one of the first lay-preachers, may properly follow these extracts. It is dated, "Chinley, July 30th, 1745:"—"The ministers of the church persecute with all their strength. I desire your advice in this affair. With whom shall we join? The society are some miles from the church, and cannot have fellowship with this people.\* They have a desire to know whether you or your brother, once or twice a year, would not deliver them the sacrament. As to my own soul, I am weakened much for want of partaking the ordinance; and the minister of Chapel-en-le-Frith flatly denies me the sacrament, and has ordered me and some others to be put out of the church. Dear sir, consider these things well, and let me have your answer speedily."—*Jackson's Life*, p. 331.

C. But did not both the brothers say that they would live and die in the communion of the church, and that none who regarded their advice or example would separate from it?

M. They did. But when they spoke of separating from the church, they did not mean what you mean by

---

\* That is, with the Dissenters; of whom he had before said that they "began the persecution."

that term—the holding of separate assemblies for worship and partaking of the communion among themselves. Those things they considered quite compatible with their profession of union with the establishment and their resolves never to leave it.

*C.* What, then, could they mean?

*M.* Mr. John shall answer you: “When Mr. Smyth pressed us to separate from the church, he meant, ‘Go to church no more.’ And this is what I meant seven-and-twenty years ago, when I persuaded our brethren not to separate from the church.”—*Works*, vol. vii. p. 312. Or more fully thus: “Mr. Smyth advised me,” says he, “to leave the church; meaning thereby, (as all sensible men do,) to renounce all connection with it, to attend the service of it no more, and to advise all our societies to take the same steps.”—*Works*, vol. vii. p. 323.

“At present I apprehend those, and those only, to separate from the church, who either renounce her fundamental doctrines, or refuse to join in her public worship. As yet we have done neither.”—*Works*, vol. vii. p. 274.

But lest I should encroach on your time, allow me to offer for your acceptance the tract entitled, “The Opinions of the Rev. John Wesley, with regard to continuing in the communion of the church, honestly stated.”

*C.* Thank you. I will read it carefully. There is another point or two on which I wish to ask a question, if you please.

*M.* By all means, sir.

*C.* You have admitted more than once that the Wesleys were devotedly attached to the national church and longed for its reformation above all things. That they laboured long and hard for this, I readily grant; and also that their labours have been productive of great good. But do you not think that the Church of England and the Protestant Episcopal Church in this country are now in a greatly improved state?

*M.* Unquestionably it is so, in some respects.

*C.* Then let me ask, what do you suppose Wesley would do under present circumstances? If he so closely

adhered to the church in her low estate, how much more would he do so in her revived condition? Surely you should consider whether the time is not come when you are called upon to return as a body to first principles and to a union with the church. I am not without hope that you would find a disposition in some influential quarters to assist such a movement to the utmost; and if there were no other reasons in its favour, the rapid progress of Romanism might surely suggest to all classes of Protestants the advantage and necessity of a closer union among themselves. By such an alliance the Methodists would gain much in comfort and respectability; the church would derive a substantial benefit in the healing of an extensive breach; and the common cause of Christianity must be greatly assisted by an advance, though it were but of a single step, toward that blessed state for which our dying Saviour entreated his Father, "that they all may be made perfect in one."

*M.* You have suggested matter for an hour's discourse, sir; but I will make my reply as short as possible. I am not insensible to the blessings of Christian unity in general, and would part with a good deal to secure it. Still less am I insensible to the advantage of union among Protestants, under present circumstances: though I must take leave to say, that I do not think the anti-Romanist party would be strengthened by the junction of the Methodists with your church; as it is certain that the tone of true Protestant feeling in the latter has declined most grievously in the last few years. The Methodists, therefore, can do better service against Rome in an independent position than they could possibly render otherwise. They must needs be hampered by any thing like a coalition with the Protestant Episcopal Church, just now, when a large party exists within her pale, on whose speedy conversion to Rome the Pope and all his hosts are joyfully reckoning. But this is only one branch of the general subject; and looking at the case as a whole, it may be thus stated:—First, I ask myself, can we not have unity without uniformity? And a careful perusal of the Scriptures satisfies

me that we can, and ought to have it. But, secondly, as you think differently, how far is it my duty to act upon your views rather than my own? I say in reply, I will do so as far as I can with a good conscience. Then, thirdly, we come to the points in which I, as a private person, should conscientiously demur to the uniformity which you demand in order to unity. I say, as a private person; for as I have no authority to propose alterations on either side, I must take things as they are. Some of the subjects on which I should desire satisfaction are these:—Whether in your church I should have the same privileges as I now have—the same opportunities for “doing and receiving good;” and if not, whether I may lawfully give them up without an equivalent?

*C.* Privileges! opportunities! what can you mean? Would you not have the Liturgy, which Wesley pronounced the best in the world, and without which he protested that your services at the meeting were incomplete?

*M.* I suppose we should; yet the prayer-book has great faults as well as great excellences, and I should be very sorry to be tied to it exclusively. But if we joined your church, we must give up extemporary prayer altogether. Our ministers could never vary from the “prescript form” on any emergency; and in public worship, and all the offices of devotion, we should be actually deprived of all the gifts which God has bestowed upon them for the service of his church. Our prayer-meetings, too, where other gifted persons, not ministers, exercise themselves, and edify the brethren, would, I presume, be at an end. Our class-meetings, love-feasts, and other similar services must needs follow in the train of the prayer-meetings.

*C.* You might then have less excitement, (and that is a dangerous thing at best,) but you would gain in quietness and peace.

*M.* Sir, I take the liberty to doubt that. The excitement which these meetings keep up is not, as you suppose, an enemy to peace, but a friend rather. Our Saviour severely reprimanded and threatened one of the churches of old because she was not excited: all excitement, there-

fore, cannot be wrong. Would not the Laodiceans have had more *true peace*, if they had so stirred up the gift of God, that their love had become a vehement flame, which many waters could not quench, nor the floods drown? You say, your church offers me peace, instead of excitement. I say, God be thanked, I have peace already; so that I need not go to your church to get that; and I cannot spare the excitement which she proposes to do away with. Therefore the advantage is on the side of remaining as I am.

C. I am sorry to hear you speak of gifts and **gifted** brethren: that was the cant of the Puritans.

M. True, sir; and the use which they made of those terms has often disgusted me as much as it has you. But the terms themselves are scriptural, and may not be thrown away because they are abused. You will not deny that the gifts of the Spirit are bestowed upon believers for their mutual edifying; and if so, they must needs be exercised; and what can there be wrong in speaking of Scripture facts in Scripture words?

C. I think it tends to self-complacency and spiritual pride; and besides, mere natural endowments are often mistaken for spiritual gifts.

M. Will you throw away your prayer-book because forms tend to formality? Do you not use it, and boast of it too, notwithstanding this admitted fact? Suffer me then to speak of the gift of prayer, and of the exercise of it also; though I know that, like every other good thing, such phrases are liable to abuse. You cannot deny, however, that to confine oneself to a form is to neglect, or throw away, the gift of prayer.

C. But the Lord's supper is Christ's own ordinance, and must be, consequently, worth all the rest.

M. I have the eucharist, and other ordinances too. I am requested to give up the rest, that your church may give me—what? Why, the eucharist? You may call this exchange, sir: to me it seems more like robbery.

C. You assert that you have the eucharist; but that I cannot grant. Your teachers cannot consecrate it.

*M.* The Methodists have better assurance of the validity of their sacraments than the adherents of the so-called "apostolical succession" have. We are not troubled with doubts as to the genealogy of our ministers; nor have we need of elaborate historical inquiries to trace the line in which a supposed authority has come down to them. We know by experience that the body and blood of Christ are verily and indeed received by believers in the Lord's supper, as the Catechism teaches; for we find the effects which the same book describes as following from the participation of them, the strengthening and refreshing of our souls. Our ministers have the seals of their apostleship in the people by whom they are surrounded, and whom they have begotten through the gospel; just as St. Paul was the spiritual father of the Corinthians. They say therefore to us, "If we be not apostles to others, doubtless we are unto you;" and we admit their claim without hesitation.

*C.* I grieve to see you so confirmed in your schism.

*M.* I will not allow the charge of schism; but it would be impossible to discuss that point to-day. I cannot allow our conversation to close without mentioning another of our distinguished advantages which must be renounced if we were to join your church. Our real unity would be at an end; and, instead of it, we should have division, and heart-burnings, and strifes of words. At present, our ministers, though with much diversity of talent and manner, speak the same thing; whereas with you, sir, there are endless diversities. Several of your ministers are millennarians; many scores are Arminians; and again, many scores are Calvinists. Many, I grieve to say, are half Papists and hate the very name of Protestant: hundreds more glory in Protestantism and reproach their brethren as traitors to the church. The only points of agreement between these parties are, first, they have subscribed certain formularies, which each understands in his own way; and, secondly, they contend that their construction is the view of the church. And the result of all this is, that when we go into one of your houses of



worship, unless we know beforehand who is the minister, we are never sure what doctrine we shall hear. Whether the prayers will give the lie to the sermon, or the sermon to the prayers, or whether both will happen to agree, we must be content to leave to the chapter of accidents. If, however, I could be sure that these difficulties could be at once got over, I must be satisfied on another point, which, if possible, is still more momentous. Methodism was not established by me, but came to me as an inheritance. I find it in existence, and in active operation, not only in England, Scotland, Ireland, the British colonies, and the United States, but in many purely heathen lands. Were we to renounce it, we should be parties to the destruction of some of the largest missionary institutions in the world; and I want to know if the world could spare Methodism? It does not appear to me to be in a condition to do so at present. Meanwhile, sir, if we cannot have the formal external unity which you seem to think so desirable, let us do what we can to secure mutual quiet and forbearance. If I think it my duty to "abide in the same calling wherein I was called," do not count me as an enemy, but allow me to do so peaceably. You cannot give me any thing; nor can you take any thing from me. But I recommend to your careful consideration these sayings of the wisest of mere men: "Strive not with a man without cause, if he have done thee no harm;" and, "Devise not evil against thy neighbour, seeing he dwelleth securely by thee."

## METHODISM NOT A SCHISM.

---

THE charge of schism continues to be advanced, in some quarters, against Methodism. As that charge has so often been denied and refuted, the tenacious maintenance of it is but too apt to create unfriendly feeling. Yet it is hoped that the Methodists will imitate the example of their honoured predecessors, and guard with patient care against every thing that would violate the law of Christian meekness. Let them be firm, but calm. Angry passion is not the element of truth. "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Charity is the "more excellent way;" and charity "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth: beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things," and, even if hope itself should fail, "endureth all things. Charity never faileth." It is, we trust, with an unaffected regard to the claims of charity that we approach the question which is revived by the circumstances of the present times, and again forced on our attention—Is METHODISM A SCHISM?

I. WHAT IS SCHISM? It seems necessary to settle this point at the very entrance, that the way may be thus prepared for our chief inquiry.

Schism literally denotes a *rent*, a *cleft*, *fissure*, or *rupture*, a *division*.\* Of this there is no dispute. But the main question is, What *kind* of a rent, rupture, or division, are we to understand by the term when it is used concerning the Christian church? Here, if anywhere,

---

\* The Greek noun *σχίσμα* is immediately derived from *σχίσμαι*, the first person, perfect passive, of the verb *σχίζω*, I *rend*, *cleave*, or *divide*.

lies our difficulty on this subject. How, then, or in what sense, is the term employed in the Scriptures? for it occurs there not unfrequently, though it is almost constantly *translated* in our English Bibles, and indeed is retained but once in the *text*, and twice in the *margin*.

To pursue this inquiry with perfect satisfaction, our only method appears to be, to trace out what may be called the history of the word, comprehending the verb as well as the noun, in its several successive *applications*. This course may be thought tedious and minute; but it is safe. The examples which we shall produce are taken not only from the New Testament, but from the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament, commonly known as the version of the Seventy.

1. Schism is applied to *material substances* which sustain some breach or injury.

Thus it signifies *a rent in a garment, the vail of the temple, and a net*. "No man," as we read, Matthew ix. 16, "putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the *rent*" (or *schism*, σχίσμα) "is made worse." Mark ii. 21, uses exactly the same expression; but Luke, v. 36, has the verb, "the new" (σχιζει) "*maketh a rent*." So the verb is also elsewhere employed to signify the *rending of garments*. "Then came Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, that was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, the son of Asaph, the recorder, to Hezekiah, with their *clothes rent*," (ἐσχισμένοι τοὺς χιτῶνας,) "and told him the words of Rabshakeh. And it came to pass, when King Hezekiah heard it, that he *rent his clothes*," (ἔσχισε τὰ ἱμάτια.) Isaiah xxxvi. 32; xxxvii. 1. The Roman soldiers, in making a distribution of our Lord's garments into "four parts, to every soldier a part," said among themselves of his "coat," which "was without seam, woven from the top throughout," "Let us not *rend it*," (Μὴ σχίσωμεν αὐτόν.) John xix. 24. This had, without doubt, a reference to rending with the purpose of dividing, or separating, the vestment into distinct portions; but the word itself simply expresses the act of *rending*,

or tearing. So, in respect of the vail of the temple, it is recorded by three of the evangelists, that, at the time of our Saviour's crucifixion, "the vail of the temple *was rent*," (ἐσχίσθη.) This issued in a separation of its parts; but, then, such a separation is particularly noted. It "was rent *in the midst*," says St. Luke; and the other two evangelists, more emphatically, "it was rent *in twain from the top to the bottom*." The verb is likewise used of a net in the history of the miraculous draught of fishes, after our Lord's resurrection. "Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three; and for all there were so many, yet was not the net *broken*," (οὐκ ἐσχίσθη,) it was not *rent* or *torn*. John xxi. 11.

Again, the word denotes a *cleft, fissure, opening, in a rock, mountain, wood, or the heavens*. "In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; to go into the *clefts*" (σχισμὰς) "*of the rocks*, and into the tops of the ragged rocks."\* Isaiah ii. 20, 21. "I went down to the *bottoms* of the mountains," says Jonah, literally from the Hebrew, as in the margin of our Bibles, to the "*cuttings off*," or, according to the version of the Seventy, to the *clefts*, or *schisms* (σχισμὰς) of the mountains, to the depth of the sea not far from the shore, where the mountains appear to be cut off, or abruptly terminated, and where their rocky bases are cleft into fissures and caverns: "the earth," as it follows, "with her bars was about me for ever." Jonah ii. 6. The verb is applied in like manner. "They thirsted not when he led them through the deserts: he caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them: he *clave the rock* also," (σχισθήσεται πέτρα, the rock shall be cleft,) "and the waters gushed out."† Isa. xlviii. 21. "The earth did

---

\* Instead of σχίσμα, the version of the Seventy has ἐσχίσθη; but without the slightest difference of meaning.

† The version of the Seventy makes most of the verbs in this text future, putting the whole in the direct form of a promise. Aquila uses the verb, Ps. lxxviii. 15, "He *clave* the rocks."

quake, and the rocks *rent*," (ἐσχίσθησαν.) Matt. xxvii. 51. "The mount of Olives shall *cleave*" (σχισθήσεται. shall be cleft) "in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley." Zech. xiv. 4. Abraham "*clave*" (σχίσας, having cloven) "the wood for a burnt offering." Gen. xxii. 3. "They *clave*" (σχίζουσι, they cleave) "the wood of the cart," on which the ark of the covenant had been laid, "and offered the kine a burnt offering unto the Lord." 1 Sam. vi. 14. "Whoso removeth stones," says Solomon, "shall be hurt therewith; and he that *cleaveth*" (σχίζων) "*wood* shall be endangered thereby." Eccles. x. 9. St. Mark uses this word, in its participial form, in the history of our Lord's baptism: "And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens *opened*," (σχιζομένου,) where the marginal version is, "*cloven, or rent*." Mark i. 10. It may also be noted that, in the Wisdom of Solomon, which, with the other apocryphal books, is good authority in matters of verbal criticism, the participle is applied to the *cleaving of the air* by the action of a bird's wing in rapid flight:—"When a bird hath flown through the air, there is no token of her way to be found, but the light air being beaten with the stroke of her wings, and *parted*" (σχιζόμενον) "with the violent noise and motion of them, is passed through."\* Wisd. v. 11.

The word further denotes a *violent severing of the human body*; and, also, *such a want of arrangement and congruity in its several parts and members as would be inconsistent with its harmony, health, and comfort*. An example of the former use of the term, as a verb, occurs in the History of Susanna: "And Daniel said, Very well: thou hast lied against thine own head; for even now the angel of God hath received the sentence of God to *cut*" (σχίσει, and shall cut) "*thee in two*;"† where it is pro-

\* Aquila uses the verb in a somewhat peculiar sense, Isa. lix. 5, "That which is crushed *breaketh out*" (ἐσχίσθη) "into a viper."

† In Isa. xix. 3, for, "the spirit of Egypt shall *fail*," or, "be *emptied* in the midst thereof," Theodotion has σχισθήσεται, shall be *divided*,

bable that there is a reference to the mode of punishment which our Lord, according to the literal interpretation of his language, denounces by another word against the "evil servant:" "The lord of that servant shall *cut him asunder*, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites."\* Matt. xxiv. 50, 51. But an example of the latter use of the term, as mentioned above, and one which is of great importance to us in our present investigation, occurs in the following passage: "God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: that there should be no *schism*" (*σχίσμα*) "in the body; but that the members should have *the same care one for another*. And whether *one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it*. Now," adds the apostle, "ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." 1 Cor. xii. 24-27. The value of this text, in the question now before us, arises, partly, from the application of its figurative language to Christ's mystical body, the church, and, partly, from the exact view which it gives us, by means of a contrast, of St. Paul's sense of the word in this connection. A schism here, where the word itself is retained by our translators, plainly means *all that is not in accordance with mutual care and entire sympathy, whether in suffering or in honour*.

2. Schism is applied to *companies of people assembled together, and differing in their sentiments and judgments*, but without any observable reference to church communion or division. The bare citation of the passages where the word occurs in this application seems to be quite sufficient to explain its meaning. "Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scriptures said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David

---

\* Where the word especially referred to is *ἀποραγήσει*.

was? So there was a *division*" (or *schism*, σχίσμα) "*among the people* because of him." John vii. 40-43. "Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath-day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a *division*" (or *schism*, σχίσμα) "*among them*." John ix. 16. "There was a *division*" (or *schism*, σχίσμα) "therefore again *among the Jews* for these sayings. And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him? Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?" John x. 19-21. "The multitude of the city" (ἐσχίσθη) "*was divided*"; and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles." Acts xiv. 4. "When Paul perceived that the one part" of the Jewish council, before which he was brought, "were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the multitude" (ἐσχίσθη) "*was divided*." For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit; but the Pharisees confess both." Acts xxiii. 6-8. It is proper to observe that the "dissension" which gave occasion to this schism, or "division" of the multitude, had an evident bearing on religious tenets. We may just add here that, in the first book of Maccabees, the verb is used in the account of a warrior, who rushed through the ranks of the enemy, and broke, or parted them, in pursuit of his object: "Eleazar, perceiving that one of the beasts, armed with royal harness, was higher than all the rest, and supposing that the king was upon him, ran upon him courageously through the midst of the battle, slaying on the right hand and on the left, so that they *were divided*" (ἐσχίσθησαν) "from him on both sides."\* Mac. vi. 43-45.

\* By a singular interpretation of 1 Sam. xv. 29, one Greek version has, "Israel" (ἐσχίσθησαν) "shall be cut or divided into two." The Seventy give the same turn to the passage, but use another word.

3. Schism is applied to a *Christian church, viewed as disturbed and agitated by internal commotions*. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," says St. Paul to the Corinthians, who were grievously rent by such schism, "that ye all *speake the same thing*, and that there be no *divisions*," or *schisms*, (*σχίσματα*), "*among you*; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." 1 Cor. i. 10. The nature of church schism among the Corinthians may be clearly discerned in this text by an attention to what St. Paul marks as its contrast or opposite. It is the reverse of "*speaking the same thing*;" and especially of "*being perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*." It is an uncharitable division of sentiment, choice, and affection, attended with corresponding language; or, according to the apostle's own application of the term to the human body, as already noted, it is a want of mutual care and entire sympathy among those who are members of the same mystical body. The church of Corinth was not separated into distinct communities. It is addressed as externally and formally *one*: "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth." But it was internally divided in its views, preferences, and talk. "For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren," adds the apostle, "by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are *contentions* among you—" "*contentions*," a word which, in this context, is very nearly related to the preceding word "*schism*." "Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" The church of Corinth, then, was violating the union of brotherly unanimity and love. Its schisms were not outward separations *from* the church, at least not yet; but they were perilous dissensions and divisions *within* the church. This will appear still more fully from another passage in the same Epistle, the only one which remains to be produced on this branch of our subject. "Now in



this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye *come together* not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when ye *come together in the church*, I hear that there be *divisions*," or *schisms*, (*σχίσματα*), "among you; and I partly believe it. When ye *come together* therefore *into one place*, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper; and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not?" or, "them that are poor?" "What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not." 1 Cor. xi. 17-22. The evil had become fearful. It extended itself to practice, and to practice in the observance of the most solemn institution of Christianity. The language which St. Paul uses is, however, irreconcilable with the notion of separate or distinct communities, as at that time existing among the Corinthians. They "*came together*:" they "*came together in the church*:" they "*came together into one place*," and that, too, to celebrate the Lord's supper; and yet, as the apostle "had heard," and "partly believed," there were *schisms* among them.

We have thus endeavoured faithfully to lay before the reader all the evidence which the Holy Scriptures and the Apocryphal writings directly supply concerning the import of the noun schism, and of the verb from which it is derived. In every disquisition of this kind it is desirable that we should trace the primary or leading notion of a word through all its applications, how diverse soever those applications may be; and that we should especially mark that primary meaning, as it discovers itself in the scriptural use of the word, when it has an immediate relation to the subject on which our researches may be employed. According to these acknowledged principles, we cannot but arrive at the conclusion that schism, in its scriptural application to a Christian community, does not mean a separation *from* the church, but a violation of harmony, dissension, division *in* the church. The sacred Scriptures teach us to watch evils in their very rise: and they warn

us against the sin of schism, as they do also against other sins, while it exists in the thought, the temper, the occasional outbreaks of divisive words and deeds, and before it has produced all its disastrous results. Christians ought to be admonished that there may be schism among them, as there was among the Corinthians, when there is, as yet, no outward separation from each other's society and communion. The very "beginning of" unchristian "strife" in a church has the taint and curse of schism. O that it were more sedulously avoided, even where its presence may be least suspected! It is "as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention," even "before it be meddled with." "It is an honour for a man to cease from strife."

But these remarks involve an admission, which we most freely make, that schism *in* the church naturally tends to a *schismatical* separation *from* the church, and that this is often, not always, its melancholy sequel. Now it is perfectly agreeable to the usages of language to apply a term which, strictly speaking, expresses a thing itself, to the consequences which commonly flow from such a thing; or, in other words, to apply the name of a cause to its ordinary and congenial effect. A few of the earlier examples which we have quoted of the use of the term schism, may seem to favour this extension of its meaning. At all events, such an extension of its meaning is not violent or forced; and, accordingly, the term is employed in the latter sense by ecclesiastical writers, both of ancient and of modern times, in full agreement with the laws which regulate human speech. We are willing to take it, on the present occasion, in this more enlarged signification. Schism, then, will denote the *evil cause, an uncharitable division within the church*, as it evidently does in St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians; or the *evil effect, an uncharitable and schismatical separation from the church*. Further than this, as every scholar must know, the laws of interpretation will not fairly suffer us to go.

II. Having thus attempted to prepare the way, we now

proceed to our main inquiry, IS METHODISM A SCHISM? Is it *an uncharitable division within the church?* Is it *a consequent uncharitable and schismatical separation from the church?* Or is it *both the one and the other?* What arguments are offered to prove that it is any of these?

1. Perhaps it may be alleged that Methodism exists *in a state of separation* from the Anglican and Anglo-American Church, and that, therefore, it is in a state of schism; or, if more exact language please, that it was formerly in a state of schism, and is now in a state of schismatical separation.

The argument is *unsound*. It advances from a particular to a universal, and infers that because schism may denote *one* kind of separation it therefore denotes *all* kinds of separation. We have granted that schism may be used, as it is used by good writers, for its too frequent effect, a *violent* separation; but does it therefore follow that it must extend itself to *every* separation, even when such separation is unavoidable, and is peaceably made? Will any respectable man maintain this? As there may be schism where there is no separation, so there may doubtless be a separation, an outward, inevitable, quiet separation, where there is not, and where there has not been, schism. Schism does not embrace every kind of separation; nor, reversely, does every kind of separation prove the existence of schism.

But, further, if the argument prove any thing, it proves *too much*. It goes to show, not only that the Methodist churches, but that all the churches of the Reformation are in a state of schism; nay, that every church on the face of the earth is in a state of schism. Is any one disposed to push the argument to this its legitimate conclusion? Look at the Eastern and Western churches. They were once united; but they have now existed in a state of separation from each other for the space of nine or ten centuries. They differ, also, not merely in such things as the use of images and the celibacy of the clergy, but, in one point at least, on a question which is con-

nected with the Christian faith itself: the Eastern Church holding that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *only*; the Western, scripturally, as we believe, that He proceeds from the Father *and the Son*. Are these churches in a state of schism? Perhaps they are. But, if so, which is the schismatic church? The Bishop of Rome might say, "The Eastern Church." The Patriarch of Constantinople might, with equal justice, and, if he were another Photius, probably would, without any ceremony, hand back the unenviable compliment, and say, "The Western Church." Look again at the Church of England. It was formerly a part of the Western Church, or the Church of Rome. Once, indeed, it might exist, nor do we deny that it did exist, as a primitive and apostolical church, free from Romish domination. But it did not so continue to exist. At the time of the Reformation it was found under the jurisdiction of Rome, incorporated with the Romish Church. It is not so now. It exists in a state of separation. Is it therefore schismatic? It is not. A Methodist, as well as a member of the Anglican Church itself, would repel the charge; and each ought to disclaim an argument which, while it is unsound in its principle, is so sweeping in its conclusions.

2. But, to come closer to the point, it may be pleaded that, Methodism was *schismatic* in its origin, and that, consequently, the Methodists are schismatics. Are they? In what? The argument now under consideration implies an appeal to facts; and by facts its truth may best be tested.

Are the Methodists schismatics in *doctrine*? What truth, what doctrinal truth, contained in God's most holy word, and embodied in the "faith which was once delivered unto the saints," do they deny or dispute? Nay, do they not cordially embrace, as scriptural, the sacred verities which are found in the creed, called the Apostles' and in the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England itself, as compared and explained, as they have often been, by some of its own most distinguished ornaments? Indeed, their Twenty-five Articles were taken by Mr. Wes-

ley from the Anglican Confession—except one, “*Of the Rulers of the United States of America.*” “The law of” the Lord’s “mouth,” with all that it teaches, “is better unto them than thousands of gold and silver.” They know something of its value; and they would not willingly renounce, conceal, or pervert any holy principle which may be drawn from it, either directly, or by just collection.

Are they schismatics in *spirit*, or *temper*? Here it is that schism most commonly arises. It opposes itself more particularly against that which constitutes the true unity of the church in its members, fraternal unanimity and love. The hearts of Christians are to be “comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.” They are to “put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.” “A new commandment,” says our Lord, “I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” “Owe no man any thing,” says St. Paul, “but to love one another.” “Walk in love.” “Ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.” This is “the unity of the Spirit,” which we are to “endeavour to keep in the bond of peace.” A violation of this is schism, whether there be an external separation or not. But what disunion in charity have the Methodists, as a body, sought to promote? They say, and they say it from the heart, “Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity,” whatever name they may bear, and in whatever place they may dwell. They aim, not at division, but at Christian union; and, in conjunction with Christ’s faithful servants of every cast and colour, they would habitually pray and strive, that sinful men may be brought to repentance and faith, to pardon and holiness, to peace and divine love, to happiness and heaven. They who feel, and aim, and act otherwise, are not Methodists; and they ought not to usurp the name.

Are they schismatics in *practice*? In what respect? They labour to use such means as may, by the blessing of God, assist themselves and others to "make their calling and election sure." But they despise and impugn no salutary discipline. Their predecessors held religious meetings, in addition to the public services of the Church of England; and they also formed religious societies. But these things were not new: they had been practised before, under the eye, and with the sanction, of the church itself. The fathers of Methodism, as is well known, had no intention to separate from the Anglican Church. They laboured long, with their coadjutors and more immediate successors, against separation. But the English Methodists were at length constrained, not by their own free choice, but by the unkindly treatment of others, to take their present position. As to the Methodist Episcopal Church, that was organized by our fathers, under the direction of Mr. Wesley, in 1784, when the Church of England no longer extended its jurisdiction over this country, and several years before the Protestant Episcopal Church had an existence. Whatever may be said of the latter, it is preposterous to charge the former with schism, on the ground of its independent organization.

3. It may be asserted, however, that Methodism *tends* to schism, or to something very much like schism. We hope not. Is there any particular sign of this in the tenets, temper, or conduct of the Methodists? We speak not of solitary individuals, but of the church. Is the Methodist Episcopal Church adverse to truth, to Christian dispositions, to quietness in practice? Is it not always ready to express a friendly feeling for other churches, and to give proof of the sincerity of that feeling? and does it supply no evidence of its earnest desire for that period when all professed Christians shall rejoice in their common Lord, and shall be joined to each other in the brotherhood of mutual love? Methodism is not a schism; and our hope is that it will never become a schism, or any thing which may be justly classed under the head of schism.

To dispute the claims of the Methodist Episcopal Church, including the validity of its ministry, on the ground of schism, is therefore absurd. The first ministers of the Methodist Church were, indeed, ordained by Mr. Wesley, assisted by other presbyters of the Church of England. Its adoption of the Episcopal form of government, agreeably to Mr. Wesley's advice, does not, of course, affect the validity of its Presbyterian orders. But the Methodists cannot rest the validity of the Christian ministry on the *mere transmission of orders*, whether in the Episcopalian or the Presbyterian line. They cannot forget St. Paul's charge to Timothy: "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to *faithful men*, who shall be *able to teach* others also." Personal faith, accompanied with fidelity, and ability to teach, are proposed here as essential conditions, or qualifications, in those to whom the office of the ministry is confided. They may not be disregarded. The personal enjoyment of Christian faith and religion, competent gifts for the ministerial office, and the inward motion of God's Holy Spirit, which the Church of England so distinctly acknowledges in her impressive ordination service, these things are never to be overlooked or disparaged. They will also be followed, in one form and degree or another, with ministerial fruit—the seal of God's blessing. A ministry is proved to be valid where these unquestionably exist and abound; but, without these, even the ministry which is deemed most regular in its official transmission is without validity—sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. We value order and regularity; but they must be connected with ministerial grace and fruit.

The first Methodists found the mercy of God, which they had long and anxiously sought; and they thirsted to make that mercy known to all mankind. They coveted not ease, honour, or affluence, but souls; and they repaired to those who were most destitute and neglected. Regardless of fatigue, danger, and even death itself, they took their stand among the outcasts of Moorfields and Kennington-Common, the colliers of Kingswood, the

miners and wreckers of Cornwall, the keelmen of Newcastle, the potters of Staffordshire, and others who were, at that time, equally forsaken. They looked around for aid to their fellow-clergymen, but, with a few exceptions, in vain, and more than in vain. They implored help, and received opposition. God was pleased, however, to raise up auxiliaries in the arduous warfare from among their own spiritual children. Alone and persecuted, they "laboured" at first; but, after a short time, others began to "enter into their labours." Workmen multiplied, and the work spread. From Europe, these servants of Christ and of souls have at length passed into every other great division of the globe, still aiming more especially at the dark Galilees of our earth, and gladly bestowing their prayers and toils on the wandering Indian, the untutored African, and the savages of the Polynesian Isles. The system, beyond the thoughts and expectations of its first agents, has risen into order, maturity, and strength: it has flourished for more than a hundred years, and extended its kindly influence in all directions. How many thousands who, but for the instrumentality of Methodism, might have continued in profligacy and guilt, and died in darkness and dread, have found pardon and holiness in life, peace in death, and, we doubt not, endless rest with God! How many thousands more are happily "journeying unto the place," the heavenly Canaan, "of which the Lord hath said, I will give it you?" And when they say to any one whom they may find in the wilderness, "Come thou with us," it is always with the addition, "and we will do thee good." Their ministers, urged on by higher motives than flesh and blood can give, have essayed difficult enterprises. "Have they not sped?" Has not the Lord condescended, in his most undeserved mercy, to seal their call and prosper their endeavours? They may at least turn east, west, north, and south, to the "children which God hath graciously given" them, and say, "If we be not ministers of Christ unto others, yet doubtless we are to you: for the seal of our ministry are



ye in the Lord. OUR ANSWER TO THEM THAT DO EXAMINE US IS THIS."

To the opponents of the Methodists we would venture to repeat the wise and oft-cited admonition of Gamaliel: "Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God." The Methodists seek to do you no harm. They desire your Christian welfare, and they will rejoice in your Christian success with a joy most cordial and sincere; but they dare not fear your frowns. And "whereto" they themselves "have attained" in spiritual wisdom and grace, let them "walk by the same rule," let them "mind the same thing." Let them remain steady to the spirit and principle of their fathers. Nothing can injure them but their own unfaithfulness. If Methodism fall, it must fall by a suicidal act.

Ye who "labour in the word and doctrine" among us, whether at home or abroad, "suffer the word of exhortation." Strive to "approve yourselves as the ministers of God—by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, ye live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." Let each of you, "if reviled, bless;" if "persecuted, suffer it;" if "defamed, entreat." "Stand firm as an anvil beaten: it is the part of a great combatant to be wounded, and to conquer."—*Ignatius's Epistle to Polycarp*, sect. iii.

## METHODIST EPISCOPACY.

---

### A DIALOGUE BETWEEN A CONGREGATIONALIST AND A METHODIST.

---

*Congregationalist.* I have been intending, Mr. Brown, to call on you for some time to talk a little about a matter of importance. When I came to this place I brought with me a certificate of membership in a Congregational church, but as there is no church here of that faith and order, I am at a loss to know what to do with it.

*Methodist.* Why can't you, Mr. Robinson—like other Congregationalists that come here—join the Presbyterian church? It does not differ much from yours, does it?

*C.* Our Confessions of Faith don't differ much, I believe; though to tell the truth, I have no use for the Calvinism contained in either of them, nor have our ministers either, if we may judge from their preaching. But our systems of church government are very different. I do not like the cumbrous machinery of sessions, presbyteries, synods, and general assemblies—they involve too much litigation, and have too much the appearance of a spiritual aristocracy. Mr. Jones, the Episcopal minister, called on me the other day, and requested me to join "the Church," meaning *his* church, for he says he cannot give the title of church to any of the "dissenting communities."

*M.* Well, why cannot you accept his invitation? Mr. Jones would not, like some of his brethren, require you

to be rebaptized—confirmation, he says, is all that is necessary in such cases.

*C.* So he told me ; but I told him that his church was split up into so many parties, as the Edinburgh Review says, High Church, Low Church, Broad Church, and these variously subdivided—some are all but Papists and some all but Puritans—some say the prayer-book teaches baptismal regeneration, others, though with small reason, deny that it does any such thing—some defend the dogma of succession, others ridicule it as a stupid fable : in short, I told him that his church was too much of a Noah's ark for my use.

*M.* What did he say to that ?

*C.* He said, it is the ark of safety, nevertheless, which cannot be said of any of "the sects," and, besides, however they might differ on some points, they all rally around their sublime and incomparable liturgy, which is a bond of union to them all.

*M.* What did you reply ?

*C.* I merely said that I thought that bond was about as strong as a rope of sand, for the "variations of popery" are not more numerous and more conflicting than those of his church. I admitted that their liturgy is the best in the world, but that I should consider it a severe tax to be confined exclusively to its use in the public worship of God. I told him too that I had serious objection to Episcopacy as a form of church government ; and, to be candid, Mr. Brown, I do not like your church on account of its Episcopal polity. The fact is, I am too republican to be a prelatist.

*M.* A *prelatist*, Mr. Robinson ! Do you suppose the Methodists favour prelacy ? I assure you we are very far from considering our bishops in the light of *prelates*. We do not consider them above the elders in point of order—in fact, they are elected by the elders to do a specific work for them ; and their powers and prerogatives can be limited or extended at any time, or, indeed, their office extinguished, by the united pastorate of the church. There is a great difference, Mr. Robinson, between the

*jure humano* and the *jure divino*, the *human* and the *divine* right of bishops. In the former respect alone do we consider our bishops superior to the elders—in the latter respect we acknowledge no difference; for, as Mr. Wesley considered himself, so does every one of our elders consider himself, as much a scriptural bishop as any prelate in the world. I hope you will not attach the odium of prelacy to our Episcopacy, for we utterly repudiate the unscriptural and arrogant pretensions of the mitred “apostles of the uninterrupted succession.”

C. I am surprised to hear you talk in this strain, Mr. Brown. I have been told that your bishops have more power than popish bishops themselves—that they are irresponsible in their government—that they have all the church property under their control—in short, that they are little less than ecclesiastical dictators and despots.

M. I have heard all this, and more than all this, many a time, Mr. Robinson.

C. And what have you to say to it all?

M. I cannot say much: I can only say, it is not true. Our bishops do not hold any of the church property—they do not appoint the trustees, who are nearly all laymen—they have no control over the houses of worship, except as they appoint the preachers from year to year to minister in them, according to the compact between the ministry and the membership—they are not irresponsible functionaries, for their official acts undergo a rigid examination by the general conference, which has the power to reverse them if they are unconstitutional—they are not dictators and despots, for they are subject to constitutional and statutory law, if I may so speak, and can be suspended or expelled for sufficient cause, by the elders from whom they receive their authority. That they are invested with prerogatives which, under the constitution of the church, others cannot exercise, I admit; but you know, Mr. Robinson, “some are and must be greater than the rest”—there must be order in every society. The Baptists and Congregationalists cannot hold associations or councils—the Presbyterians cannot hold sessions, presbyteries.

synods, or assemblies—the Lutherans cannot hold particular or general synods, without chairmen, presidents, or moderators; and no acts of these bodies are valid unless pronounced so by the officers in question. While in office they have as much power as Methodist bishops: the only question is, whether there should be rotation in office or permanency during life or good behaviour. We adopt the latter plan, in order to escape the inconvenience of frequent elections, and because we wish our chief governmental functionaries to have all the facility in the performance of executive duties which a lengthened experience affords—an itinerant, general superintendency could not be kept up without permanency in the presidential office—by this arrangement we secure a *prestige* to the office, a proper respect for the acts of those who fill it, a ready submission to their lawful authority, and—

C. Stop a minute, Mr. Brown, I can appreciate your remark about frequent elections: I can very well see how a man may acquire facility in the exercise of executive functions by continuance in office, as practice makes perfect; but is there not some danger that this policy will engender a spirit of independence and arrogance in those who are promoted to this distinction? In the civil government, you know, we go in for a republican rotation in office. But you, Methodists, I am told, are not very good republicans.

M. We do not boast quite as much of our republicanism as some others, though, perhaps, we have more of the essential principle and practice of republicanism in our church, than can be found in any other. This, however, is incidental. Jesus Christ is the Head of the church and King of Zion. In executing his laws, it is necessary to adopt certain arrangements, and those which answer that great end best receive our most cordial approval, no matter whether they be considered monarchical or republican: it so happens, however, that our economy, as I have already intimated, embraces more genuine republicanism than any other. A frequent rotation in office is not essential to republican government—in civil offices, in many

cases, it may be highly expedient—in others it may be inexpedient. We do not care to know how it would work in our Episcopacy—our present system has worked to admiration from the beginning—when it engenders arrogance and results in tyranny, we can very readily change it for another. We are not restricted by any *divine right*.

C. You spoke about securing a *prestige* to the office—is there not a little prelacy lurking under that expression? With prelatists, you know, the office is every thing, the man who fills it, nothing—with Congregationalists, the office is a small matter, the qualifications of the incumbent are every thing.

M. Just so, Mr. Robinson; and we endeavour to steer between these extremes. The more important and responsible the office, the more highly do we esteem it: at the same time, we do not lose sight of the qualifications of those who fill it. We are of opinion that the highest functions of government demand more than ordinary consideration, and to secure this, we commit them to a few of the wisest and best men in the ministry, and experience vindicates the policy. We have seen much good, and no evil, result from the arrangement. You know, Mr. Robinson, our ministry is organized on the Itinerant plan; and though we do not contend that this is absolutely prescribed in the New Testament, yet it is not forbidden, either by precept or precedent—it is in accordance with the spirit of the apostolic institution—and has been owned and blessed of God to an extraordinary degree: we therefore are strongly wedded to the system. But in a country so wide-spread as ours, it would be very difficult to keep up a genuine Itinerancy, without a vigorous Episcopacy. The attempt to do so has been tried by others, and has proved a signal failure. The *prestige* which attaches to the Episcopal office—the disinterested position of its incumbents—their experience in executive affairs—their age, wisdom, piety—all tend to inspire both preachers and people with confidence in their administration, and to induce a ready acquiescence in their distribution of the

ministers at their annual visitations. Their superintendency, moreover, being extended through their constitutional assistants, the presiding elders, the rank and file of the ministry are stimulated to the discharge of their duties, and greatly encouraged by the example and counsels of their seniors and superiors in office. As the people are the gainers by this arrangement, and as it is voluntarily entered into by the preachers, neither party has any cause to complain.

*C.* But is there not something preposterous in the idea of the preachers clothing men with authority which is to be exercised on themselves? The apostle intimates that there is an absurdity in the greater being blessed by the less—does not that absurdity attach to your polity?

*M.* Not at all : the apostle speaks of sacerdotal blessing, which of course proceeded from the greater to the less; but what has that to do with the case in hand? Do not the people of the United States elect their own rulers, and after the latter are clothed with the functions of government, are not the former constitutionally bound to be subject to the powers that be? And did ever any true republican imagine any absurdity in this? Presbyterians and others choose their own ministers, moderators, and presidents, invest them with authority, temporary or permanent as the case may be, and bind themselves to obey them that thus have the rule over them; and is there any absurdity in this?

*C.* But I understand that your Episcopacy originated with Mr. Wesley, who was only a presbyter—how could he make a bishop?

*M.* A *divine right* bishop he could not make; but he could solemnly designate a brother presbyter to such an office as Dr. Coke and his successors in the Methodist Episcopacy have filled; and they could very well exercise the functions with which they were thus clothed, among a people who voluntarily sought and heartily endorsed the arrangement.

*C.* But it is denied that Mr. Wesley intended to clothe Dr. Coke and Mr. Asbury with Episcopal powers, or

that he wished the American Methodists to recognise them as bishops in any other than a Presbyterian sense. Hence he reproved Mr. Asbury for allowing himself to be called a bishop.

*M.* This denial, Mr. Robinson, is very bold and utterly gratuitous—and no logician would deduce such a conclusion from such premises. You might as well say that Mr. Wesley never intended to ordain *presbyters* for the American Methodists because he calls them *elders*. He used the term *superintendent* instead of *bishop*, because of the lordly ideas suggested by the latter word, albeit it means precisely the same as the former: the one comes from the Saxon *bischof*, an abbreviation of the Greek *episcopos*, and the other from the Latin through the French—both meaning *overseer*, as the Greek word is rendered in Acts xx. 28. To show you, however, what Mr. Wesley intended to do when he took measures for the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, I beg you to read the documents which, in a minute or two, I will spread before you.

*C.* I did not intend, Mr. Brown, to put you to so much trouble.

*M.* No trouble at all, sir—the case is one of the plainest in the world. Here, Mr. Robinson, read this passage in Drew's Life of Dr. Coke, pages 71, 72.

*C.* "In the month of February, 1784, Mr. Wesley called Dr. Coke into his private chamber, and after some preparatory observations introduced the important subject to him in nearly the following manner: That, as the revolution in America had separated the United States from the mother country for ever, and the Episcopal Establishment was utterly abolished, the societies had been represented to him in a most deplorable condition. That an appeal had also been made to him through Mr. Asbury, in which he was requested to provide for them some mode of church government, suited to their exigencies; and that, having long and seriously revolved the subject in his thoughts, he intended to adopt the plan which he was now about to unfold. That as he had invariably endea-



voured, in every step he had taken, to keep as closely to the Bible as possible, so, on the present occasion, he hoped he was not about to deviate from it. That, keeping his eye upon the conduct of the primitive churches in the ages of unadulterated Christianity, he had much admired the mode of ordaining bishops which the church of Alexandria had practised. That, to preserve its purity, that church would never suffer the interference of a foreign bishop in any of their ordinations; but that the presbyters of that venerable apostolic church, on the death of a bishop, exercised the right of ordaining another from their own body, by the laying on of their own hands; and that this practice continued among them for two hundred years, till the days of Dionysius. And finally, that, being himself a presbyter, he wished Dr. Coke to accept ordination from his hands, and to proceed in that character to the continent of America, to superintend the societies in the United States."

*M.* Now, sir, read the credentials of Dr. Coke, who was ordained first Superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal Church, by Mr. Wesley himself, assisted by three other presbyters.

*C.* "To all to whom these presents shall come, John Wesley, late fellow of Lincoln College in Oxford, presbyter of the Church of England, sendeth greeting:

"Whereas many of the people in the southern provinces of North America, who desire to continue under my care, and still adhere to the doctrine and principle of the Church of England, are greatly distressed for want of ministers to administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper, according to the usage of the same church: and whereas there does not appear to be any other way of supplying them with ministers—

"Know all men, that I, *John Wesley*, think myself to be providentially called at this time to set apart some persons for the work of the ministry in America. And therefore, under the protection of Almighty God, and with a single eye to his glory, I have this day set apart, as a superintendent, by the imposition of my hands, and

prayer, (being assisted by other ordained ministers,) Thomas Coke, doctor of civil law, a presbyter of the Church of England, and a man whom I judge to be well qualified for that great work. And I do hereby recommend him to all whom it may concern, as a fit person to preside over the flock of Christ. In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and seal, this second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty-four. JOHN WESLEY."

*M.* Here is his letter to the "Societies" in the United States. I will read it to you, Mr. Robinson, if you have no objection :—

*"Bristol, September 10, 1784.*

"To Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury, and our brethren in North America :—

"By a very uncommon train of providences, many of the provinces of North America are totally disjointed from the mother country, and erected into independent states. The English government has no authority over them, either civil or ecclesiastical, any more than over the states of Holland. A civil authority is exercised over them, partly by the Congress, partly by the provincial assemblies. But no one either exercises or claims any ecclesiastical authority at all. In this peculiar situation, some thousands of the inhabitants of these states desire my advice, and in compliance with their desire I have drawn up a little sketch.

"Lord King's account of the primitive church convinced me many years ago, that bishops and presbyters are the same order, and consequently have the same right to ordain. For many years I have been importuned, from time to time, to exercise this right, by ordaining part of our travelling preachers. But I have still refused; not only for peace' sake, but because I was determined, as little as possible, to violate the established order of the national church, to which I belonged.

"But the case is widely different between England and North America. Here there are bishops who have a legal jurisdiction. In America there are none, neither any

parish minister; so that for some hundreds of miles together, there is none either to baptize or administer the Lord's supper. Here, therefore, my scruples are at an end; and I conceive myself at full liberty, as I violate no order, and invade no man's right, by appointing and sending labourers into the harvest.

"I have accordingly appointed Dr. Coke and Mr. Francis Asbury to be joint superintendents over our brethren in North America; as also Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey to act as elders among them, by baptizing and administering the Lord's supper. And I have prepared a liturgy, little differing from that of the Church of England, (I think the best constituted national church in the world,) which I advise all travelling preachers to use on the Lord's day in all the congregations, reading the litany only on Wednesdays and Fridays, and praying extempore on all other days. I also advise the elders to administer the supper of the Lord on every Lord's day.

"If any one will point out a more rational and scriptural way of feeding and guiding these poor sheep in the wilderness, I will gladly embrace it. At present I cannot see any better method than that I have taken.

"It has indeed been proposed to desire the English bishops to ordain part of our preachers for America. But to this I object, 1. I desired the bishop of London to ordain one, but could not prevail. 2. If they consented, we know the slowness of their proceedings; but the matter admits of no delay. 3. If they would ordain them now, they would expect to govern them. And how grievously would this entangle us! 4. As our American brethren are now totally disentangled, both from the state and the English hierarchy, we dare not entangle them again, either with the one or the other. They are now at full liberty, simply to follow the Scriptures and the primitive church. And we judge it best that they should stand fast in that liberty wherewith God has so strangely made them free

JOHN WESLEY."

Messrs. Whatcoat and Vasey and Dr. Coke were ordained the first two "elders," the third "superintendent,"

Sept. 21, 1784—on the 9th of the same month, Mr. Wesley wrote the Preface to his abridgment of the Liturgy of the Church of England, which he published for the American Methodists, and which was for some time used by them. Here is a copy of it. You see it contains a form for “the ordination of superintendents,” being the same with verbal variations, as that in the Protestant Episcopal Prayer Book for the consecration of bishops, with similar solemnities and for similar purposes, to wit, to preside over the church, including elders and deacons, and to ordain other ministers. Will any man of common sense say that Mr. Wesley did not intend that these officers should be bishops, under the less imposing title of superintendents? As well might it be said that he did not intend to ordain *presbyters*, because he uses this language, “The form and manner of ordaining of *elders*.” Under his instructions the following Christmas the Methodists at their Conference in Baltimore, organized themselves into a regular, independent, ecclesiastical connection, under the style of “the Methodist Episcopal Church,” formally *receiving* Dr. Coke as their Superintendent or Bishop, and *electing* Mr. Asbury as his associate in the Episcopacy—Bishop Coke, assisted by the Rev. Mr. Otterbein of the German Reformed Church and other presbyters, setting him apart to the office by the imposition of hands. A more regular, solemn, scriptural consecration has not taken place since the days of the apostles. Every thing that was done in the organization of the church and the ordination of its ministers was duly reported to Mr. Wesley, who, the very next year, in a letter to John Stretton, thus expresses his approval of their entire action: “Last autumn, Dr. Coke sailed from England, and is now visiting the flock in the midland provinces of America, and *settling them on the New-Testament plan*, to which they all willingly and joyfully conform, being all united, as by one spirit, so in one body. I trust they will no more want such pastors as are after God’s own heart.” For taking this prominent part in the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, he was severely cen-

sured by both friends and foes—even by his own brother Charles—but he always affirmed the lawfulness of his course, and the validity of the orders which he conferred, and so have the British Methodists, to a man—they admire our ecclesiastical polity, and many of them have expressed an earnest desire for the introduction of an episcopacy like ours into their own economy. I believe none but bigots of the prelatical type dispute the validity of our ordinations, albeit our brethren of the non-episcopal churches, of course, do not attach any importance to their being conferred by “bishops,” nor do we ourselves consider purely presbyterial ordinations one jot or tittle less valid than our own.

*C.* So far as Mr. Wesley is concerned, I must confess you have demonstrated the truth of your position; but is not the whole business an anomaly in church government?

*M.* By no means: it is rather the rule than the exception. I have already remarked that in all churches, however democratic their constitution, some degree of imparity obtains in the ministry—some are chosen out from the rest to perform certain services for their brethren—all cannot personally do every thing in the government of the church. And if a man can be clothed with superior powers for a day, a month, a year, why may he not for life, or during good behaviour? The Lutheran churches in Europe have a class of ministers corresponding with our bishops—pastors of pastors as well as of the people—they are called *præpositi*, inspectors, or *superintendents*, in some churches, and *bishops* in others—yet they were not consecrated by prelatical bishops, but by presbyters, exactly like our own. Their office is described in the Harmony of Confessions—to visit parish ministers, preside in synods, examine and ordain candidates for the ministry. Luther, Melancthon, and all the German Reformers, so far as we know, favoured the Episcopal polity. Thus they say, in the Augsburg Confession, “The tyranny of the bishops is partly the reason why that canonical polity is dissolved anywhere, which we exceedingly desire to preserve.” Calvin and Beza expressed their approval of such a polity,

though they did not consider it necessary to adopt it in the Swiss and French churches. Speaking of the primitive church, Calvin says, (*Ins.* book iv. c. iv. :) "They named all those on whom was enjoined the office of teaching, presbyters. These chose one of their number in every city, to whom in particular they gave the title of bishop, lest from equality, as usually happens, dissensions should arise. Yet the bishop was not so superior in honour and dignity that he had dominion over his colleagues; but those duties which a consul performs in the senate, that he may report concerning matters, collect their opinions, go before others in consulting, admonishing, exhorting, regulate the whole proceedings by his own authority, and execute what may have been determined in common council—that office the bishop sustained in the assembly of presbyters. And the ancients themselves confess that it was introduced by human agreement, through the necessity of the times." He agreed with Luther and Melancthon in regard to the inexpediency of dissolving the episcopal regimen of the church, if the bishops then in office would "grant that which in reason they ought to grant." He says, "But, verily, if they would grant to us a hierarchy, in which bishops should take the pre-eminence, so that they refuse not to be subject to Christ, depend on him as their only Head, and may be referred to him only, in which if they cultivate brotherly charity among themselves, and are bound together in no other manner but by his truth, then, if there be any who shall not reverently and with all obedience, pay submission to it, we confess that there is no anathema of which they will not be worthy." Beza says, "Far be it from me that I should rashly censure or proudly inveigh against this order, which though not constituted by intention abstractedly divine is yet apostolical, especially since none can deny that its advantage has been great, so long as good and holy bishops preside. Therefore let those who will, and can, enjoy it." "It was an attribute essential, which was, is, and necessarily will be permanently of divine administration, that in the presbytery,

one, the first both in office and dignity, should, in this act of governing, preside, especially since to him it is awarded as a matter of divine authority. But it was a property *accidental*, that presbyters, in a government wherein one is pre-eminent, should, from the beginning, succeed one another by rotation, which method of *single* pre-eminence by degrees became changeable, so that any individual chosen by the judgment of his fellow-presbyters should be for life president (*proestos*) over the presbytery." Zanchius, while he affirms that in the times of the apostles there were but two orders under them, says, "Nevertheless, we censure not the fathers for multiplying the orders of the ministry, since that was free to them as well as to us, and was done from sufficient causes, at that time belonging to order, propriety, or edification." The Confession of the Polish Churches says, "Of particular churches we believe the regimen, as established by Christ, to be aristocratical; yet so as that we refuse not the bishops, or superintendents a certain superiority as compared with the rest of the presbyters." This system of general superintendency obtained at first in the Reformed Church of Scotland, as appears from the Book of Policy, A. D. 1581. The whole kingdom was divided into ten districts or dioceses, which were statedly visited by superintendents set apart to the responsible work of planting and erecting churches, ordaining ministers, and the like. The Waldenses, before the Reformation, had a similar policy—the claims of *prelatical* succession set up in their favour by some being untenable. They elected one of their number, *primus inter pares*, the first among his equals, to preside in their councils and to take a general oversight of their ecclesiastical affairs. Unless deposed for some delinquency, he continued in office until disabled by infirmities or removed by death. Reinerius says they had four orders: the first called *Bishop*: the second *Filius Major*: the third *Filius Minor*: the fourth *Deacon*. The bishop took the lead in religious matters when present—in his absence, the first presbyter or *Filius Major*—and in the absence of both these, the second, or *Filius*

*Minor.* When Dr. Gilly, in 1823, asked Peyrani, whether the Waldensian Church had not bishops in former times, he replied, "Yes, and I should now be styled bishop, for my office is virtually episcopal; but it would be absurd to retain the empty title when we are too poor to support the dignity, and have little jurisdiction save that which is voluntarily submitted to among ourselves: the term Moderator is, therefore, now in use with us, as being more consistent with our humiliation." See Faber's *Vallenses*, book iv. c. iii. It is evident that the lordly state of Popish prelates was present to his mind when he spoke of the title of bishops, as inconsistent with the depressed condition of the Waldensian churches. The Moravians have an Episcopacy which they profess to derive from Stephen, bishop of the Waldensian Church. This derivation does not appear to be an historical fact—howbeit, they had and still have bishops, or superintendents as they were called in King Edward's letters-patent for the incorporation of their church in London. The Culdees had a similar policy. Their ministers were trained in the monastic seminary of Iona—the abbots or presidents of which were not prelates, but presbyters—nevertheless, these presbyter-abbots exercised prerogatives equal to any exercised by Anglican prelates and greater than those exercised by Methodist bishops. They ordain deacons and presbyters for the ministry at home, and bishops to send abroad. The emissaries of Rome were as much incensed at them for this as their amiable successors have been at us for our episcopal ordinations; but they cared as little for the complaints and denunciations of the former as we do for those of the latter. The bishops they ordained for England recognised their filial relation to the presbytery at Iona and refused to acknowledge the claims and to succumb to the demands of Austin's prelacy at Canterbury or Gregory's popedom at Rome. And they were right. But I beg your pardon, Mr. Robinson, for acting the monologue—I really forgot myself.

C. I am glad you did. Pray, proceed, if you have any



more precedents for your Episcopacy. It really does not seem to be so anomalous as I had supposed.

*M.* Anomalous, Mr. Robinson ! hear what Jerome says about it. Read this passage in his Commentary on Titus i.

*C.* "Presbyters and bishops *were* FORMERLY *the* SAME. And before the devil incited men to make divisions in religion, and one was led to say, 'I am of Paul, and I of Apollos,' churches were GOVERNED by the COMMON COUNCIL of the PRESBYTERS. But *afterward*, when every one in baptizing rather made proselytes to himself than to Christ, it was everywhere decreed that one person, elected from the rest of the presbyters in each church, should be placed over the others, that, the chief care of the church devolving upon him, the seeds of division might be taken away. Should any one suppose this opinion, viz. that bishops and presbyters are the same, and that one is the denomination of age, and the other of office, is not determined by the Scriptures, but is only a private opinion, let him read over again the apostle's words to the Philippians, saying, 'Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus, which are at Philippi, with the *bishops* and *deacons*: grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.' Philippi is one of the cities of Macedonia; and certainly as to those who are *now* esteemed *bishops*, not more than ONE at a time can be in ONE and the same city. But because bishops at *that* time were called the same as *presbyters*, before the apostle speaks of BISHOPS indifferently as *being the same* as presbyters. And here it should be *carefully observed* how the apostle, sending for the presbyters, in the plural, of the SINGLE city of EPHESUS ONLY, afterward *calls* the SAME PERSONS *bishops*. Acts xx. 17, 28. He who receives the Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews, there finds the care of the church *divided* EQUALLY among MANY: 'Obey *them* that have the *rule* over you, and submit yourselves; for *they* watch for your souls, as they that must give account; that *they* may do it with joy, and not with grief;

for that is unprofitable for you.' And Peter, who received his name from the firmness of his faith, says, in his epistle, 'The PRESBYTERS who are among you, I exhort, who am also a presbyter, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: feed the flock of God which is among you, [*taking the oversight* thereof, ἐπισκοποῦντες that is superintending it,] not by constraint, but willingly.' These passages we have brought forward to show, that, with the ancients, PRESBYTERS were the SAME as BISHOPS. But, that the roots of dissension might be plucked up, a USAGE GRADUALLY took place that the chief care should devolve upon one. Therefore, as the presbyters know that it is by the CUSTOM of the church (*ecclesiæ consuetudine*) that they are to be subject to him who is placed over them, so *let the bishops know that they are ABOVE presbyters* rather by CUSTOM than by divine appointment, and that the CHURCH OUGHT to be RULED in COMMON."

M. Jerome is still more explicit, if possible, in his Epistle to Evagrius. It is not necessary to refer to the book, the passage is so familiar: "For at Alexandria, from Mark the evangelist to Heraclas and Dionysius, bishops, the presbyters always elected one from among themselves; and having placed him in a higher rank, named him bishop—after the manner that the army chooses its general, or the deacons select one from among themselves, whom they know to be industrious, and call him arch-deacon."

C. But do not prelatists assume that a bishop ordained the person whom the presbyters elected?

M. Of course they do; but then you see it is a gratuitous assumption, and something worse—it palpably contradicts Jerome, and makes him argue like an idiot. The presbyters of the later church in Egypt and elsewhere *elected* their bishop, but the ancient Alexandrian presbyters *ordained* him too, exercising thus a prerogative of their order. The analogy drawn from the appointment of generals and arch-deacons settles the question. Jerome's account, moreover, is corroborated by Eutychius,

himself a patriarch or bishop of the diocese. He says that "the twelve presbyters constituted by Mark, upon the vacancy of the see, chose out of their number one to be head over the rest, and the eleven laid their hands on him, and blessed him, and made him patriarch." See Gieseler's *Ecc. Hist.* sec. 34. And it must be remembered that the see of Alexandria was one of the five great patriarchates into which the Christian world was divided—and held in high esteem by all the rest. But, really, Mr. Robinson, it is superfluous to adduce proof on this subject, when, as Dr. Holland, *regius professor* of divinity at Oxford, says, "To affirm the office of bishop to be different from that of presbyter and superior to it is most false—contrary to Scripture, to the fathers, to the doctrines of the Church of England yea to the very schoolmen themselves:" while all these parties favoured and maintained the Episcopal regimen. When the Papists prated about successional prelacy at the time of the Reformation, Bishop Jewel, in opposing it, quoted Augustin's language, "The office of a bishop is above the office of a priest [not by authority of the Scripture, but] after the names of honour which the custom of the church hath now obtained." The good bishop waxed warm on the subject: "What meant Mr. Harding here to come in with the difference between priests and bishops? Thinketh he, that priests and bishops hold only by tradition? Or is it so horrible an heresy as he maketh it, to say, that by the Scriptures of God a bishop and a priest are all one? Or knoweth he how far, and unto whom, he reacheth the name of an heretic? Verily, Chrysostom saith, 'Between a bishop and a priest in a manner there is no difference.' St. Hierome saith, somewhat in rougher sort, 'I hear say there is one become so pceevish, that he setteth deacons before priests, that is to say, before bishops, whereas the apostle plainly teacheth us that priests and bishops be all one. Augustine saith, 'What is a bishop but the first priest, that is to say, the highest priest?' So saith St. Ambrose, 'There is but one consecration of priests and bishops, for both of them are priests, but the bishop is

the first.' All these, and other holy fathers, together with St. Paul, the apostle, for their saying, by Mr. Harding's advice, must be holden for heretics." Another learned bishop of the English Church, speaking of the *jure divino* claim of prelacy, (*Irenicum*, p. 301, Am. ed.,) says, "Which doctrine I dare with some confidence assert to be a stranger to our church. On the other side," says he, "those who hold ordinations by presbyters lawful do not therefore hold them necessary, but it being a matter of liberty and not of necessity, Christ having nowhere said that none but presbyters shall ordain, this power then may be restrained by those who have the care of the church's peace; and matters of liberty being restrained ought to be submitted to in order to the church's peace. And therefore some have well observed the difference between the opinions of Hierom and Acrius. For as to the matter itself, I believe upon the strictest inquiry, Medina's judgment will prove true, that Hierom, Austin, Ambrose, Sedulius, Primasius, Chrysostom, Theodoret, Theophylact, were all of Acrius's judgment, as to the identity of both name and order of bishop and presbyters in the primitive church; but here lay the difference, Acrius from hence proceeded to separation from bishops and their churches, because they were bishops." In other words, Acrius denied the lawfulness and expediency of episcopacy as distinct from presbytery. The Papists and their copyists affirm its necessity. We endorse the ancient, catholic, scriptural doctrine, which keeps clear of both extremes—denying the necessity and affirming the expediency of an Episcopal polity.

C. With regard to its antiquity and authority, and I will add, its expediency, I must confess you have furnished powerful evidence in its favour. You have made me understand, what I never understood before, the difference between the *jure divino* and the *jure humano* doctrines concerning episcopacy, as distinct from presbytery—which you say is the difference between the Methodist and the prelatical views of the question. I can now appreciate the force of the learned Selden's remark:

"They are equally mad who maintain that bishops are so *jure divino* that they *must be continued*, and they who say they are so unchristian that they *must be put away*." But I do not see, Mr. Brown, how you will make out the scriptural character of Methodist Episcopacy.

*M.* One way of doing that, Mr. Robinson, would be to show that the Scripture says nothing against any of the elements entering into its constitution, but that, on the contrary, the great scriptural ends of the ministry, the promotion of unity and peace and the development of vigour and zeal, are subserved by it. It is therefore scriptural.

*C.* If your assumptions be correct. But does not the Scripture forbid this imparity among brethren—the exercise of lordship over one another?

*M.* There can be *imparity* without *lordship*. The apostles were superior to private Christians, but they had not dominion over their faith, and never sought to lord it over God's heritage. The imparity is superinduced by the inferior party, and the authority thereby conferred on the superior is exercised by the one and submitted to by the other, with no ambitious aims in the former or voluntary humility in the latter, but with reference on the part of both to the profit of all.

*C.* That sounds well.

*M.* Yes, and it works well too, as we have proved by experience. This, indeed, is what might be expected when we see its agreement with the spirit of the New Testament and the general policy of the apostolic church. Litton well remarks, "A gradation of ranks in the ministerial order, and, under a proper system of checks, an independent ministerial authority, are clearly sanctioned in Scripture, and have been proved by experience to be eminently conducive to the well-being of the church. Indeed, wherever the scriptural model of a church, governed, not by a single pastor, but by its college of presbyters, is retained—wherever there is an organization of the clerical body—there must exist the relation of superior to inferior. So it was from the first." Take, for example, the seven

Apocalyptic churches. I will specify the first of them—that at Ephesus. High-churchmen tell us that “the angel of the church” was a *prelate*: Presbyterians say he was “a *pastor*, the ordinary and only minister,” *Coleman’s Primitive Church*, p. 161: Congregationalists take away his personality altogether. Indeed, Augustin, who seems to have been on every side of almost every question, considered the angel a personification of the church, which perhaps suggested Neander’s interpretation, “the symbolical representation and image of the whole church”—an interpretation somewhat too ideal for my comprehension. The plurality of elders at Ephesus excludes the Presbyterian view. As to prelates, they were not known until after this period. All the presbyters of the apostolic churches were bishops, for those very officers that Luke calls *presbyters*, Paul calls *bishops*, Acts xx. 17, 28. Iræneus, indeed, and after him, hypothetically, Bishop Taylor, Archbishop Potter, and some others, affirm that the latter were not identical with the former, but that the bishops were the prelates of Ephesus and neighbouring dioceses; but as this is gratuitous, and evidently would not have entered into the brain of any man, had there not been an hypothesis to serve—as it contradicts the record—and as the term *church* always means in Scripture either the entire body of Christ, or else a particular society, this forced interpretation has been abandoned by the prelatists, who now acknowledge that the bishops of Ephesus were “presbyter bishops,” and not prelates. It is very certain the angels of the churches were not diocesan bishops.

C. What then were they?

M. Origen says they were *proestotes*, presiding elders, or bishops *par eminence*. This is, perhaps, what Augustin meant when he called them, *episcopos sive præpositos ecclesiarum*, bishops or presidents of the churches. They represented their brethren in the ministry, as Bishop Stillingfleet calls them, “the consessors or order of presbyters,” and also the people of whom they had the spiritual charge—they were in a sense responsible for them,

and were addressed accordingly in the Apocalyptic epistles. I cannot, indeed, prove that they were permanent officers in their respective churches, nor can any one prove that they were merely temporary. Their successors were permanent, as Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna. The fathers say that after Timothy had ceased to travel as an evangelist, St. Paul being dead, he became bishop of the church at Ephesus, that in fact he was the angel of the church spoken of in the Revelation; and some suppose he was chosen to that office by the elders or presbyter-bishops of that church, because he was favourably known to them—others think he was set over them by St. John, the surviving apostle, who laboured principally in Asia Minor—while prelatists say St. Paul made him the diocesan of Ephesus when he besought him to abide there at the time he went into Macedonia. This last hypothesis contradicts the record—the others do not—but neither of them is sustained by any reliable testimony. One thing, however, is certain, immediately after the apostolic age the church of every city was governed by a senate or presbytery, with one of their own order as permanent president, variously styled *proestos*, *antistes*, *episcopus*; and the style of the epistles to the angels of the seven churches favours the opinion, generally held by the learned, that their office was also that of a permanent presidency, embracing a superintendence of their fellow-presbyters as well as of the people.

C. This view of the subject seems reasonable enough, I confess.

M. Then there is the case of Timothy and Titus as presented in the New Testament. Prelatists say they were apostles of the same order as Peter and Paul, and at the same time prelates, diocesan bishops of Ephesus and Crete. But this is gratuitous, and, withal, self-contradictory. Apostles, as Chrysostom says, were not bishops, or pastors of any particular churches, but they had the whole world for their parish. They are never called bishops in the New Testament, nor are Timothy and Titus. These latter are never called apostles; nor were they apostles in

the ordinary sense of the term. Some say they were presbyters, and so they were, in a general sense, as were also the apostles; but neither the former nor the latter were presbyters, in the sense of pastors of particular churches. Timothy and Titus were *evangelists*—extraordinary officers, spoken of Acts xxi. 8; Eph. iv. 11; 2 Tim. iv. 5: they were assistants of the apostles, sometimes their companions in travel, sometimes their legates to the churches which the apostles founded and which they could not visit in person. Hence we find Timothy, Titus, Luke, Silvanus, Sosthenes, Mark, Tychicus, Artemas, and others, in the employ of the apostle, visiting Corinth, Rome, Ephesus, Crete, Athens, Thessalonica, Philippi, and other places—remaining in a city for a longer or shorter space of time, according to the amount of service required of them in order to establish the churches on the apostolic basis. Their office, like that of the apostles, was extraordinary and temporary—albeit Eusebius speaks of evangelists in after times, but from his description of them I should think they corresponded to modern missionaries more than to those assistants of the apostles. The evangelists of the second and following centuries had no jurisdiction over regularly organized churches and their pastors: the primitive evangelists, like the apostles, had such jurisdiction. Whether or not the exercise of that power was limited by specific apostolic appointment cannot, perhaps, be determined—it would seem from the history that it was. Whether it was or not, its exercise lends no countenance to prelatical, diocesan episcopacy—neither, on the other hand, does it favor the assumptions of those who can tolerate nothing but absolute parity in the ministry. The apostolical and evangelical offices, though extraordinary and temporary, may have suggested to the primitive church a permanent presiding-eldership, or general oversight of pastors and people, which for other reasons, as stated by Jerome, they found highly expedient and everywhere adopted, at a very early date.



C. Do you intend to intimate that this is a precedent in favour of Methodist Episcopacy?

M. I do; but not a precedent of prescriptive force. The analogy is striking, and ought not to be overlooked. Churches organized upon this model, it seems to me, have the best, the most scriptural polity. There may be a genuine church and a valid ministry where there is no ministerial imparity, or where it is pushed to a prelatical extreme, but the *via media* of Methodist Episcopacy seems to be more in accordance with Scripture and better adapted to secure the ends of church government than parity on the one hand or prelacy on the other. I am pleased to see those views endorsed by an excellent writer in the Church of England, Mr. Litton, in his late work on the Church. He says, "The cases of Timothy and Titus, if they fail in establishing the apostolicity of episcopacy, are not without their value, as against the opponents of that form of church government. What these cases really appear to establish is, the general, but important principle, or rather principles, that an imparity of Christian ministers is not only allowable, but scriptural; and that, according to the mind of St. Paul, the general superintendence or government of an ecclesiastical district, including churches with their presbyters and deacons, is best committed to a single person." "When episcopacy was introduced, to bishops, as being so far successors of the apostles as that they were the highest order of ministers in the church, the power of ordination was, agreeably to apostolic precedent, reserved—a reservation which was ratified by ancient canons and has received the sanction of immemorial usage. On this solid ground it is best to rest the practice of episcopal ordination. That bishops rightly ordain, we can say with certainty: to say that none but they can ordain, is not only to add something of our own to the written word, but to set aside the evidence of history, which testifies to the contrary, and to abandon the moderate position taken up on this subject by our most learned divines." Pp. 426, 570. He specifies Field and Hooker—he might have be-

gun with Cranmer and come down to Sumner, the first and last Protestant archbishops of Canterbury; and, with the exception of a few bigots, of the Dodwell and Taylor type, and the Romanizers of the Pusey school, he could claim them all on his side of the question.

C. He seems quite modest and moderate in his assumptions. But do not ecclesiastical historians say that all churches in primitive times were independent societies, and all self-governed?

M. They do; and, with proper explanations, that is true. But such statements have been greatly misconstrued. The New Testament never speaks of the *church* of a *province*, or of a *country*—it always says *churches*, in the plural, *e. g.* the churches of Judea, Galatia, Asia, &c. The churches were independent of each other, so far as their internal government was concerned. They were all, however, united under one regimen, by the general superintendency of the apostles and their assistants, the evangelists. On the other hand, the New Testament never speaks of the *churches* of a *city*—it always says *church*, in the singular, *e. g.* the church at Jerusalem, Corinth, Ephesus, &c., albeit there were many presbyters in each of these cities and many houses of worship. The societies or assemblies which held their meetings at different parts of the city were not independent of each other, nor were their respective ministers independent—the several societies were united under one common presbytery, composed of all the ministers in that particular city—one of them being the president of both pastors and people. To use the eloquent language of the author I have just quoted, “Christianity, as it appears in the New Testament, knows nothing of the atomistic theory of modern independentism. There can be little doubt that, even in the apostolic age, the church of each considerable city—such as Rome or Ephesus—consisted, not of one congregation, but of several, who were collectively styled the church of that place: certain it is that such was the case toward the close of the first century. It could not be otherwise. The expansive power of Christianity

caused it to break forth on all sides; and speedily the original congregation, or, in modern language, the mother church, of each city, gave birth to other societies of Christians in the surrounding neighbourhood. In this way there were probably, in each locality, many distinct assemblages of worshippers; but however numerous these assemblages may have been, they still formed but one church, and were presided over, not each by its own pastor, but by a college of presbyters, who, collectively, superintended the affairs of the whole society, or rather district. No notion is more at variance with the spirit of apostolic Christianity than that of societies of Christians existing in the same neighbourhood, but not in communion with each other, and not under a common government. The primitive church of Jerusalem may be regarded as, in this respect, the model of the apostolic churches in general. The number of converts in that city, which rendered it impossible for them to assemble in one place for the exercise of public worship, must have given rise to a division into congregations; yet, in the inspired history, but one ministerial body is mentioned in connection with this church, viz. the college of 'elders,' who, under the *quasi episcopate* of James the Less, appears to have regulated its affairs in common, forming a single deliberative assembly, in which all matters of moment were discussed and decided. An arrangement by which an effectual safeguard was interposed against the feeling of dependence and helplessness under which the pastor, who is in a state of isolation, labours, and which has been found by experience to operate prejudicially both upon his own spiritual interests and those of the flock over whom he presides. In the primitive church, each presbyter felt himself sustained in his dealings with the Christian people by the whole weight of authority belonging to the college of which he was a member; and the people, on their part, learned to look upon their pastors, not as creatures of their own, but as officers of the church, occupying a recognised position and independent rights." Pp. 449-451.

C. There is a great deal of force in these observations

I have known many a Congregational minister who was completely under the power of the people whom he served—so far as church government was concerned, he was a mere automaton—he was “called” to do a certain amount of ministerial service for a particular society, and so long as he gave satisfaction to his employers his *pastoral* relation and pay continued, but as soon as his employers became dissatisfied, because of his faithfulness or of his unfaithfulness, or because they could call a more popular man, the relation was dissolved—they cast about for a new pastor, and he went to a new parish, *if he could get a call*. I have always thought the usefulness of the minister, as well as the dignity of his office, was greatly lessened by this policy.

*M.* There is no doubt of it, Mr. Robinson—a reasonable degree of independence is necessary to enable any man to make full proof of his ministry. If prelacy tends to clerical arrogance, Congregationalism tends to clerical servility: an episcopacy like that of the first age of Christianity, essentially reproduced in the Methodist Episcopal Church, tends to keep the ministry from both extremes. It is an admirable bond of union to the pastors and the people whom they serve.

*C.* But Presbyterians affirm this of their councils.

*M.* And not without some reason. In the actual working of their system there is a great deal more of the episcopal element developed than they seem to imagine. But, as Litton says, “a senate or presbytery is, at best, an imperfect exponent of social or corporate sentiment, which ever loves to see itself embodied in a person. It is only a person that can call forth and attract to himself the emotions of love and veneration to which Christianity gives peculiar scope: it is only around a person that men are found to coalesce heartily for a common purpose. In the eloquent language of Moehler, the craving of the faithful in Christ for combination cannot rest satisfied until it sees itself expressed in some type or representation. The bishop is the visible expression of this longing—the personification of the mutual love of the Chris-

tians of a given locality—the manifestation and the living centre of that Christian spirit which ever strives after unity.” “It may be confidently affirmed, that where Christianity is not enfeebled by adverse influences, its visible organization will always tend to something of an episcopal form, however much the name of episcopacy may be repudiated.”

*C.* But would not the extension of this principle develop a Papacy in the church?

*M.* Not while a sacerdotal character is denied to the ministry, and a *jure divino* claim to the bishops. But if all churches were episcopal in their polity, after the model of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the bishops would be a visible expression of the unity of the church, and the most venerable of their number might be recognised as the representative of the united episcopate. This would be a natural and unobjectionable, indeed a beautiful and desirable, development of the system. It would differ as much from the Papacy as the “Acts of the Apostles” from the pseudo “Apostolical Constitutions.” Meanwhile, it must be borne in mind that, by the very constitution of the Methodist Episcopal Church, her bishops are to be in labours more abundant than other ministers, they are to travel throughout our ecclesiastical bounds in superintending the pastors and the people whom they serve, thus by their example and official influence maintaining the organic unity of the body by keeping all its parts and members in lively and healthful action. Mr. Isaac Taylor’s *beau ideal* of “a new Methodism” is the itinerant general superintendency of the Methodist Episcopal Church, of which, by the way, he seems to be *insularly* ignorant. “Let leave be granted,” says he, “for affirming that, to gather the thousands of people, the tens of thousands that now loiter away their Sundays within sound of the church chime, there must be brought to bear upon them an effective ITINERANCY: the multitude that is gone astray must be followed and must be pursued into their fastnesses of ignorance and profligacy by apostolic men, that is to say, by none other than the

best men of whom the church—the Christian body at large—might make her boast.” *Wesley and Methodism*, p. 284. The leave which he asks shall be granted. And here is that which he so desiderates—Methodist Episcopacy—only the theatre of its operations has been more widely *itinerant* than that suggested by Mr. Taylor.

C. In this respect too it differs from the episcopacy of the primitive church, and yet you claim that as your model.

M. Only as it regards the essence of the thing. The form differed widely at various times and in various places in the primitive church. They had a parochial episcopacy, a diocesan episcopacy, a metropolitan episcopacy, to suit the circumstances of the church and the demands of the times. The ancients lived for the most part in cities and towns—in them Christianity achieved its earliest triumphs. The more scattered population of the rural districts remained heathen long after the cities were Christian—hence the word *pagan*, a countryman, became synonymous with heathen, an idolater. After awhile the christianity of the cities extended to the adjacent rural districts, and the churches there formed were subject to the bishop of the city church. They had local presbyters, but these did not ordinarily perform episcopal duties proper, such services were rendered by the city bishop in his own person or by a *chorepiscopus*, a country bishop, deputed by him for that specific work. It is easy to see wherein our system agrees with theirs and wherein and wherefore it differs from it. The circumstances of modern society, especially in a new and wide-spread region like ours, not only justify, but demand, a modification of the episcopal regimen. Our system has this advantage over every other, ancient or modern—it is a general, as well as an itinerant, superintendency. Our bishops are a unit: they preside, in turn, over every synod. This secures a wonderful agreement, not only in doctrine but also in usages and modes of worship, in all parts of the ecclesiastical connection. We have not a score or a hundred heterogeneous dioceses, with different platforms of mem-

bership, antagonistic creeds, or interpretations of creeds, Popish, Protestant, Calvinistic, Arminian, and every shade between—we are of one heart and of one mind; and our general, itinerant superintendency in connection with our corresponding synodal arrangements is an efficient means, under God, of promoting this unparalleled uniformity. In many other respects too the annual visits and ministrations of our bishops, who rival the apostles in services and sacrifices, prove of incalculable advantage to the ministry and membership of the church.

C. But did not Mr. Wesley charge your first two bishops with studying to be great, *strutting along* while he *crept*, affecting the title of “bishop,” &c.? And does not this prove that episcopacy tends to love of ease and worldly distinction?

M. It is true, Mr. Wesley did write a somewhat caustic letter to Bishop Asbury, but it was based on calumnious charges, which have long since been refuted. The title *bishop* came naturally into use as a compellation for the *superintendent*, or occupant of the episcopal chair; and it was not suggestive of dignity and state as in Great Britain. It was no great marvel that Mr. Wesley should object to its use—no marvel at all that the American Methodists should employ it. It is to be observed too that Mr. Wesley objected to it on the score of its being in imitation of the Presbyterians, who call all their pastors *bishops*. Hence he says in that letter, “Let the Presbyterians do what they please, but let the Methodists know their calling better.” He seemed to lose sight of the fact that he had pronounced the Methodists in America at perfect liberty to follow the Scriptures and the primitive church; and that the Scriptures call all pastors *bishops*, and the primitive church called its chief pastors by the same title. The Methodists follow both: when opposing an exclusive prelacy, they call all their presbyters *bishops*, equal in point of order—when opposing an exclusive parity, they assert their right to restrict certain functions to certain presbyters, whom by way of distinction they call *bishops*. So you see, Mr. Robinson, your inference from Mr. Wes-

ley's censure has not much force. I confess, however, it makes me smile to think of Methodist Episcopacy in association with ease and worldly honours! Why, sir, the self-denying and laborious services of Methodist bishops are almost beyond parallel in ancient or modern times. Dr. Coke, the zealous *evangelist* of the British, and first bishop of the American Methodists, spent two or three fortunes in the cause of Christ. His literary labours were great, and his travels almost incredible. His biographer says, pp. 374, 375—

“Of his zeal and activity in spreading among the heathen the unsearchable riches of Christ, no evidence can be more decisive than the travels, voyages, journeys, perils, and difficulties, which his life affords. ‘*In labours more abundant,*’ is a motto that has been almost proverbially prefixed to his name since death has closed his eyes. Besides crossing the Atlantic eighteen times, and performing various other subordinate voyages, his journeys while on shore were almost without a parallel. On the American continent he travelled with the offers of salvation from ‘the Mississippi to the Bay of Penobscot, and from the Chesapeake to the waters of Ohio.’ ‘For nearly thirty years,’ says Dr. Clarke, ‘the late indefatigable and regretted Dr. Thomas Coke conducted those missions (the Methodists’) abroad, under the direction of the Methodist Conference, and by his rare and scarcely paralleled labours, and those connected with him in that work, *many thousands* of souls have been brought to the knowledge of God who bought them. He gave his life to this work—it was his meat and his drink—and the convulsive effort that terminated his days was a missionary exertion to take the gospel to the heathens of Serendib.’ In preparing for this last mission, in which he terminated his earthly career, the infirmities of age seem to have given way to the vigour of returning youth. And so intent was he upon the execution of an undertaking which he was fully assured was from God, that the dial of life, like that of Ahaz, appeared to have gone backward ten degrees. But, like Moses, although he was permitted to



approach the promised land, he was not suffered to enter it; and, like the patriarchal legislator, no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day."

His venerable colleague, Bishop Asbury, if possible, exceeded him in apostolic labours and sufferings. For nearly thirty years he performed the self-sacrificing services of the episcopate with a zeal, devotion, and success, which Wesley himself did not exceed. The Rev. Ezekiel Cooper gives this description of his labours:—

"It is scarcely necessary to mention, what must be so obvious, that in performing his astonishing annual tours, and in attending to all the vast variety of his Christian, ministerial, and episcopal duties and callings, he must have been almost continually on the move. Flying, as it were, like the angel through the earth, preaching the everlasting gospel, no season, no weather stopped him. Through winter's cold and summer's heat he pressed on. He was often in the tempest and the storm; in rain, snow, and hail; in hunger, thirst, weariness, and afflictions. Sometimes uncomfortable entertainment, with hard lodging, and unkind treatment. 'I soar,' said Mr. Asbury himself, 'but it is over the tops of the highest mountains.' Then to the distant and remote settlements, traversing solitary and gloomy valleys; crossing and recrossing dangerous waters; administering the word of life in lonely cottages, to the poor and destitute; sleeping upon the floor, or on beds of straw, or, not much better, in houses of logs, covered with barks of trees or wooden slabs; sometimes lodging in the wilderness and open air, with the earth for his bed and the sky for his canopy, surrounded by ravenous beasts and fierce savages. He knew how to abound among the wealthy, and how to endure hardship and want among the poor. This was his *manner of life*, to spend and be spent, in going about from place to place, like his Master and the disciples of old, in doing good. He *cheerfully and willingly* condescended to men of low estate. Even the poor *African race*, in bondage and wretchedness, were not neglected by him. He attended to their forlorn condition, and taught them the way of

life and salvation. When among the great, the honourable, and the rich, he manifested humility in prosperity; maintaining, at the same time, a dignified independence of spirit, *without exaltation*. When among the poor and lower classes of society, he showed a courteous condescension, and manifested content and patience in adversity. He went on through good report and through evil report, among the rich, the poor, the wise, and the unwise: *at all times, among all people, in all places, and upon all occasions*, his aim was to promote the cause of God; to be instrumental to the good of man, and to the salvation of precious souls." *Cooper on Asbury*, p. 113-117.

Of the associates and successors of these excellent bishops it is needless for me to speak. Not one of them has proved unworthy of the position assigned him in the sacramental host. At this very moment, the senior superintendent of the Southern Methodist Church, the venerable Bishop Soule, is repeating his official visit to California, whither he went last year, traversing the inhabited part of the State, from the coast to the mines, presiding in the councils of the church, ordaining men to the ministry, confirming the souls of the disciples, and stamping upon all, pastors and people, the impress of his own spirit. We are told that, at an earlier period of his episcopate, he made five tours around the continent on one horse, thus travelling in the saddle twenty-six thousand miles. This single fact will serve as a specimen of the labours performed by the itinerating bishops of the Methodist Church. With such examples of apostolic zeal and self-sacrifice before our eyes, how puerile do the paraphernalia of croziers, mitres, and man-millinery appear—how contemptible those displays of arrogance, vanity, and self-seeking, which mark the history of prelacy, whether in the Greek, Roman, or Anglican line, both in the old world and the new! And what little reason have you, Mr. Robinson, to class Methodist bishops with those mitred lords of the uninterrupted apostolical succession!

C. You wax eloquent on the subject, Mr. Brown: you almost persuade me to be a Methodist.

*M.* If you mean by that, Mr. Robinson, that the facts and arguments which I have adduced in this conversation have removed your objections to our episcopal polity, and you feel inclined to enter our ecclesiastical fold, I have nothing to say against it—we will give you a hearty welcome. But if you mean to insinuate that I have been trying to make you a proselyte from Congregationalism to Methodism, I must take the liberty to protest against it. Methodists scorn the vampire arts of proselytism. They do not creep into other folds to carry off the unsuspecting and the unguarded—thereby to increase their own flock. Methodism, indeed, has pioneered for all other churches—some of them she has supplied with a large portion of both their ministry and membership, and this she is doing still; but she seeks no reprisals. She sets up no sectarian, bigoted, schismatical, exclusive claims. She wishes to unsettle the church relations of none. She has, indeed, nothing to conceal—no doctrine which she is ashamed or afraid to publish on the housetops—no usage which she is not able and ready to defend. All who apply to her for aid shall have it. None who repent and believe the gospel, seeking admission into her communion, shall be rejected; nor shall they be received to doubtful disputations. They shall not be called to give heed to fables and endless genealogies—prelatical or presbyterial successions—for the latter has had as stout and bigoted assertors as the former. If there be a presbyterial succession, of course her ministry is in it; but she cannot produce the links which form the connected chain, nor is she concerned about it. As a general rule, *ministers* are to *transmit* their functions to others; but she dares not affirm that this is necessary in order to perpetuate the ministerial office. As to the prelatical succession, she can afford to smile at the caution with which “the judicious Hooker,” after labouring so hard to prove its necessity, admits its failure: “There may be sometimes,” says he, “very just and sufficient reason to allow ordination made without a bishop. The exigence

of necessity doth constrain to leave the usual ways of the church, which otherwise we would willingly keep : where the church must needs have some ordained, and neither hath nor can have possibly a bishop to ordain—in case of such necessity, the ordinary institution of God hath given oftentimes, and may give place. And therefore we are not simply without exception to urge a lineal descent of power from the apostles by continued succession of bishops in every effectual ordination.” *Ec. Pol.* vii. 14. *Given place*, indeed ! A pretty prelatical succession, no doubt—a golden chain, when hundreds of its links are composed of presbyters and laymen, boys and ignoramuses, intruders and simoniacs, schismatics and heretics, excommunicates and profligates—the vilest monsters that ever disgraced the earth ! No, no : the Methodist Episcopal Church has no use for such a succession as this—rather than seem to recognise it, she would have all her bishops consecrated, not as at present, by those already in the episcopal office, but by the elders alone, as in the primitive Alexandrian and other churches. With reference to those who are of a different faith and order, she, of course, thinks they are wrong in proportion as they diverge from her standard, that is to say, her view of the inspired record ; but if they hold the Head, she can very well afford to consider them members of the mystical body of Christ. She has no uncovenanted mercy or reprobating wrath to which to consign “irreverent dissenters” from her polity or heterodox rejecters of her creed. To their own Master they stand or fall. If He recognises the essential genuineness of their piety, she is not forgetful of the apostolic canon, “Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.” She has too much legitimate work on her hands, in converting sinners from the error of their ways and feeding the flock consigned to her care, to give her much time to “draw away disciples” from other communions, if she could condescend to a practice so disreputable, which she cannot do. This, however, she can

do—this she ever has done—this, I trust, she ever will do—endorse the benediction of the great, catholic apostle, “Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.”

## METHODIST ITINERANCY.

---

ONE of the organic peculiarities of the Methodist Churches is an Itinerant Ministry. This is traceable to the remarkable circumstances in which Methodism, as a new and powerful ministration of Apostolic Christianity, took its rise. One or two clergymen of the Church of England became, in the providence of God, the leaders in a great revival of religion. Their evangelic commission embraced a whole kingdom, and their preaching roused a slumbering nation. The clergy of the establishment, with one or two exceptions, took no part in this movement: many denounced it; very few sympathized with it. And yet societies were formed in all directions, and the rudiments of a great church were in the process of gathering. "Wesleyan lay-preaching may be traced up to that word—well weighed before it was uttered by Wesley's mother—'John, this lay-preacher is as truly called of God to preach as you are.'" Satisfied of the correctness of his mother's view, Wesley gave up his long-cherished prejudices, and lay-preaching, without which Methodism must have come to a speedy end, was put in operation. The necessities of the time, the aggressive character of the whole movement, the connective union of the body of societies, the desire to equalize as far as possible, among all, the benefits of a varied ministry, led to the establishment of an itinerant system. And this has come down us: now, as at the beginning, one of the most efficient and successful forms of ministerial function.

That at the rise of Methodism a travelling ministry should have proved itself eminently useful on the ground of its peculiar adaptation to the circumstances which originated it, and the special mission of a call to repentance which it worked out, might be admitted as a thing probable in itself and certain in the actual history of that great movement. It may, however, be made a question, whether in the second century of its existence, when the rudiments of the early and fervid period have settled and crystallized into organic and well-defined form, and expanded into a church institute, involving a pastoral as well as a pulpit care of souls, the itinerant model of the ministry is the best; whether modifications of the system which shall conform it to the usages prevailing in other ecclesiastical bodies, may not be advantageously adopted; in fine, whether its benefits are not outweighed by the drawbacks and disadvantages which incidentally attach to such a platform and regimen. To these questions we answer in the negative, and with the reader's permission proceed to give the reasons for this conclusion.

1. Itinerant preaching finds, at the present day, much of the original necessity still existing, particularly in rural districts and in new and thinly settled parts of the country. Let it be granted that various indications show the Methodist Church to be approaching its maturity; that in all the older Conferences the towns and villages have become, for the most part, stations, able and willing to support their ministers; still circuits, and in some of the Conferences very large circuits, are the only machinery by which regular gospel ministrations can be sent through the counties and districts outside of towns and villages. Twenty-four appointments, served once in two weeks, are still, in many of the States, the regular work of two travelling preachers. It would be better, we admit, if these circuits were divided or made smaller, so that more attention could be given to each of the societies. But the circumstances of the country do not as yet allow this. A settled pastorate could not meet the demand which is actually made by the class of wants here

specified. And thus it is obvious that the necessity for a travelling ministry still exists. In many parts of this land it is likely to exist for years to come. Long rides, hard work, and but scanty pay, after all, are the natural probabilities on which the Methodist itinerant minister is to count during the present generation. Against these he will balance the glorious certainties of preaching the gospel to the poor, spreading the leaven of Christianity through portions of society to which its influence could not otherwise reach, winning souls to Christ, and laying up treasure in heaven. In striking the balance, he will not hesitate to admit on which side falls the "great gain."

2. The aggressive spiritual force nurtured and developed by a systematic and well-directed itinerancy, is matter of high importance so long as the Christian ministry is surrounded by large masses of irreligious people. It is, unhappily, but a fond conceit, wherever indulged, to suppose that the main work of the church of Christ lies within its sacred enclosures—that having attained mature growth and large expansion, henceforth its principal efforts should be directed within. The importance of training its converts, of edifying its members, of instructing its children, of permeating its households with Christian influences, of providing the blessings of religious education in the common school and college for its army of young people of both sexes, is not denied or overlooked. But outside of all this, a true church of Christ holds a commission which looks to the evangelization of the masses of society that lie in the fatal lethargy of unbelief and unconcern as to the interests of their souls. The gospel is to be preached to "every creature." "Go ye into all the world and preach," said the risen Saviour. The aggressive element is never to be merged in the conservative. The fields are white to the harvest. A vast amount of labour is yet to be performed for our own country—for the very best portions of our country—in addition to what the heathen world claims at the hand of modern Christianity. And the question arises, what is



the best mode of laying out to the highest advantage the ministerial force at the command of the church? We do not hesitate to answer, the itinerant system of preaching. Let the following considerations be weighed.

An organized itinerant system supposes an annual gathering of the preachers at the Conference, where their reports of the preceding year's operations are presented, their ministerial character is reviewed, and their appointments for the year to come are made. These annual Conference meetings wield a powerful influence. They encourage the timid, they stir the sluggish, they inspire the drooping, they infuse a deeply felt *esprit de corps*. A man identified with such a body acquires a breadth of view, a concentration of energies, a unity and purpose of plan, a motive power, unknown to the Congregational system. A sagacious writer, not a Methodist, has put the case finely :—"The members of such a council must feel that their election to it is a distinction, and they should feel, too, that this honour brings with it no trivial responsibilities, and that these, be they what they may, can be foregone on no other condition than that of the loss of *status*, character, and social existence. Never will great things be effected by a body of men to any of whom, individually, the sort of petitionary question might be put—'Will you not attend our next annual meeting?'—followed by the surmising prayer—'Do, if you can?' It is in no such style as this—we may be perfectly certain—that war can be successfully waged with Satan, and he and his hosts driven in upon their defences. The individuals of an aggressive evangelic body must all be subject to stern law; they must be accustomed to act and to move by rule and order; and they must go forth simply, full of an effective energy—more than their own—that is to say, the energy of the collective force which sends them out."

Then observe the total self-consecration which this itinerant ministry demands. The appointment of a traveling preacher is made for a year at a time. He is liable to be removed at the close of his first year from a field of

labour altogether congenial, and sent to a distant appointment among strangers. He may go from a healthy to a sickly region. He enters into this ministry in the face of these stern conditions. He binds himself to go whithersoever the appointing power bids him. Painful separations are involved, frequent journeys, much self-denial, many domestic sacrifices. All this is painful to flesh and blood; but then it is the precise kind of discipline which makes good soldiers of Jesus Christ. It throws a man back on great principles. It nurtures the heroic in his nature. It keeps him true to the lofty aims of his one great calling. It is the never-failing test of the power of his love for souls; for as love is the soul of Christianity, so suffering is the soul of love.

Then again: while the system trains the *morale*, breeds up good soldiers by compelling them to "endure hardness," it furnishes to *every* minister work suitable to him, and *constant* work. In the ministry there has always been "diversity of gifts." The Methodist itinerancy knows well how to work up to advantage all the material put at its command. There is a place for every man who furnishes the requisite proof of his call. According to his ability his work is generally distributed to him. And until age, or infirmities, or embarrassing domestic circumstances change his relation to the annual Conference, as an effective worker, he is always in demand. It results from this that he is never out of employment. As he is not called by the people whom he serves, so no apprehension of possible dismissal from his charge, and of months of unoccupied time, disturbs him. He is never subjected to the necessity of looking for a call; or, after months of negotiation, accepting a charge in the teeth of an antagonist minority who had been clamouring for some one else.

Once more: the excitement furnished by an annual or biennial change of field—something to every man—much to most men—should not be overlooked. In the aggressive movements of a church, a ministry trained to these changes may not have the reach and finish of mental

accomplishments possessed by men always hovering around the precincts of their studies and in constant communion with theological lore. But they are likely to have, what the others want, a profound knowledge of human nature, a free and healthful sympathy with men around them, a bold, straightforward appeal to the common understanding, upon which, while niceties of diction and scholastic subtleties are lost, the matter of an argument, the sympathy of a genial heart, and the grip of a masterly strength, always take hold. We may take Mr. Isaac Taylor's testimony on this point:—"If the itinerant ministry of the Wesleyan body be placed by the side of the stagnation, the inertness, the timidity, and the gentle style that so often have become characteristic of a ministry fixed to a spot, then indeed the advantage will appear to be all on the side of the former. A few individual instances may no doubt be found, and these may be made to serve the purposes of a needy argument, showing what great things a devoted man *may* do, as father of a district, in evangelizing his neighbourhood. Such instances, rare always, are of the highest utility when employed as the materials of an instructive and stimulating biography: but they are of no pertinence when lugged into an ecclesiastical discussion."

Looking in the direction of the ministry, the foregoing elements—that is to say, the annual Conference *esprit de corps*, the necessary spirit of devotion and self-sacrifice, the constant work, and the fresh invigoration caught from a succession of new fields of labour—put the stamp of broad and ineffaceable vigour upon the itinerant system. Let us look at the system in the direction of the laity. This will supply us with a third line of argument, which is, that an itinerant ministry, under the supervision of a general episcopal superintendence, is a powerful bond of connectional union to the whole body of the church, combining conservatism with movement.

In illustration of this let the following considerations be weighed.

1. No one can enter the clerical order except with the sanction and by the license of the laity. If they fail to

recommend a candidate, no annual Conference can receive him, no bishop ordain him. Whenever any such application is made, the people know that they are assisting in making a pastor for the whole communion, one who in turn may serve them. With this distinct responsibility before them, it is reasonable to suppose that special care will be taken to lay hands suddenly on no man—to weigh deliberately all applications, and decide in the fear of God, and with a single purpose to promote his glory and the advancement of his kingdom.

2. The pastorate thus springing from the laity, each member of the clerical body is bound to serve in any field of labour where his abilities may be judged most suitable for the edification of the church, and each pastoral charge is under a correlative obligation to receive the man thus sent. It results that changes of pastors are periodical—subjected to system—governed by a law agreed upon on all hands—and consequently exempt from such objections as might lie against the frequent and violent changes of the ministry in communions where the fundamental law is otherwise. This furnishes an answer to all cavils made to the system on the ground that the laity have no voice in the selection of their ministers. What would be undesirable and even wrong in another ministerial economy and regimen where the itinerant element does not obtain, is right and fit in ours. A society or congregation about to receive a minister for life, or a long term of service, *ought* to have a voice in the selection and appointment, just as a minister under such circumstances ought to hold and exercise the right of choice himself. Where, however, the changes are annual, or at farthest biennial, and the ministry comé under the obligations of a system which looks to these periodical changes, the membership may, for the general good, relinquish *their* right of choice.

3. It is abundantly manifest that such a plan can be sustained only so long as, both in the ministry and membership, a high religious feeling prevails, based on that cardinal principle of Christianity, “none of us liveth to

himself." A low grade of religion would naturally object to so much self-denial, so much merging of self in the common weal. But, all along, to Methodism the power of the religious element has been every thing. In this it "lives, and moves, and has its being." Its ascendancy in the world, as one of the most powerful of the developments of modern Christianity, is attributable to the force of its religion. The law of its ministerial institute presumes and proceeds upon the existence of this spiritual force. This vital "spirit" being in the "wheels," the machinery moves on without friction. Let it die out, and the wheels must stand still. Its religion is interwoven with its organic forms, and it must accept the responsibility of being true to its original principles and high destiny, or see the fires extinguished on its altars and the glory departed from its temple. Thus far, the unaided energy of its religious principle has sustained those grand peculiarities which constitute the specific difference between surrounding sects and itself. So far as the itinerancy is concerned, no abatement of devotion to it is as yet perceivable.

4. If the spirit of mutual self-sacrifice, of zeal, of true religion, is nurtured and guarded by the very form of this itinerant institution, it is also obvious that *unity*, the great idea which pervades the whole polity and arrangements of Methodism, is promoted by it. An annual Conference might, without much stretch of the imagination, be regarded as a military camp. From one central authority proceeds the distribution of the forces for a year's campaign. The peculiar wants of every position are carefully scanned and as fully provided for as the means at command will allow. To this source look all the societies for their supplies. They all occupy a common relation to a united pastorate, presided over by a bishop who exercises general superintendency. The strong help to bear the burdens of the weak. The tie of a common brotherhood and common sympathy binds all together. How far this connectional unity has been instrumental in securing the remarkable doctrinal uniformity which

has characterized the Methodist Church, we need not stop to determine. The fact that doctrinal purity, according to the original standards, has been preserved intact, in times which have sifted all beliefs and subjected all truths to the closest scrutiny, and repudiated human authority, and enthroned science, and worshipped genius,—is of the highest importance. That it may be philosophically traced, in a great measure, to the causes aforementioned, there can be little doubt. The thorough indoctrination in the peculiarities of *one faith*, on the part of so large a body of Protestant Christians, amid every conceivable diversity of outward circumstances, mental improvement, and social connection, is a striking phenomenon not sufficiently dwelt upon.

5. But this grand *federalism* is eminently valuable as a conservative basis for a wide and rapid *movement*. Looking either at home or at distant heathen nations, where is the intelligent Christian who will affirm that the necessities of the world do not outrun all the means of spiritual relief as yet put forth by the whole organized Christianity of our time? Behold the spread of population in our own country. Does the gospel keep pace with it? Immigration from abroad lands whole states upon our shores. Do the footsteps of the preacher follow hard upon the track of the emigrant? Are the dense masses of Northern cities, or the plantation blacks of Southern cotton and rice fields, reached and disciplined in the doctrines and duties of Christianity? And then look abroad, and calculate, if you can, the immense work to be done before the gospel is preached in all the world to every creature. Movement the most energetic and rapid—from the firmest centres and the most compact basis of operations—is demanded. *That* agency is the best suited to the times which can touch Christian sentiment at all points, lay its hand upon every follower of Christ, and claim his prayers and efforts, and bring into the field the full resources of the kingdom of heaven on earth to the last reserve. We claim for Methodist itinerancy, in its direct and collateral influences, a prominent place in the

great movement. The foregoing remarks have been intended to set forth the theory and philosophy of the system. Let us look at the facts, and see if they correspond in any degree to what, *a priori*, might reasonably be expected from such a plan.

Southey tells us that itinerancy was no new practice in England at the time of Wesley—that the Saxon bishops used to travel through their dioceses, and where there were no churches, preach in the open air—that at the beginning of the Reformation preachers were sent to itinerate in those counties where they were most needed, for thus it was thought they would be more extensively useful than if they were fixed upon particular cures. Four of Edward VI.'s chaplains were thus employed, of whom John Knox was one; and in the course of his rounds he frequently preached every day in the week. At that time it was designed that there should be in every diocese some persons who should take their circuit and preach, like evangelists. Unhappy circumstances, adds Southey, frustrated this, among other good intentions of the fathers of the church; but it was practised with great efficacy in a part of England where it was greatly wanted, by Bernard Gilpin, one of the most apostolical men that later ages have produced. Wesley systematized what thus in former times had been occasionally attempted with good effect. If now we examine the latest statistical returns, with a view to ascertain the results which a hundred and ten years of Methodist itinerant preaching have brought about in England, we shall see that while the Established Church, sustained by the state and universities, patronized by the crown, and interwoven, like bond timber, with the whole fabric of that illustrious empire, has 14,077 places of worship, the Wesleyan Methodists have 11,007. We shall see that on Sunday evening of March 30, 1851, when the count was made, there were in attendance on public worship in the churches of the Establishment, 803,141 persons, and in attendance at the Wesleyan churches, 1,043,856 persons. These figures are given, not by Methodists, but

from returns made by the Registrar-General. Next to the Church of England, Methodism is by all odds the most powerful church in England. Preaching—itinerant preaching—has, for the most part, made it what it is.

If we look to the missionary movement, we shall find results no less surprising. For several years past, the annual revenue raised in England by the Methodists for the support of their foreign missions, has exceeded a half million of dollars. They have been equalled only by one other Missionary Society in the world. Whence have they drawn these large amounts? There are comparatively few rich men among them: the explanation is found in the admirable fitness of their system of religious operations to develop a grand movement for the conversion of the world. The missionary impulse, starting from the centre, is carried out to the extremities of the body ecclesiastic. The pulsation is felt not only in the nine London circuits, and among the 16,000 Methodists of the great metropolis, but it extends through the whole kingdom. Itinerant preaching and connectional union give the *rationale*.

If we turn to the United States, we shall find similar illustrations of the working power of the system. Just seventy years ago the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized. It required a little more than a generation—say forty years—for self-development. By that time her organization was spread over the whole country: circuit touched circuit in a net-work that stretched from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico, from the Atlantic to the van of Western civilization. Her bishops travelled around the North American continent. Then began the work of missions abroad—small enough at the commencement thirty years ago, for her hands were yet full with the home work. But collateral at first to the extension of her own organization, the missionary work has been growing, and in five years more, North and South, there will be raised for missions half a million of dollars annually. Her growth in membership is without a parallel in modern Christianity. With upward of a million and a



quarter of communicants, and a population of more than five millions of souls looking to her for religious instruction, the census of the United States in 1850 reported upward of 12,000 places of worship, and a total value of church property exceeding \$14,630,000—several hundred thousand more than that returned for any other religious denomination in the country.

These are the facts. We need not go beyond the principles aforestated, to find an explanation and sufficient reason for them. All movement without a conservative law would have run itself down ere this. The conservative element without movement would have produced stagnation. Combined, we have results unparalleled in modern Christianity.

Any feeling akin to vain-glory or pride of sect or system, which such a review might be supposed to foster, will be kept in abeyance by the sense of a responsibility always proportioned to means and facilities possessed, and by the appalling picture of a world yet in moral ruin, claiming at the hands of Christian churches the word of God and the gospel of Christ. Ah! solemn word—*responsibility*. Of the thousands of educated young men belonging to the Methodist communion, how many have acknowledged in their inmost conscience that God has called them to the itinerant ministry, and yet have stifled these convictions. Of those who have had inferior advantages, how many have entered upon the work of the ministry, to yield to early discouragements and to retire with their ordination-vows yet reverberating in the whispering gallery of memory—*Responsibility!* And of the membership of the church, what a reckoning will the great day bring to multitudes who, living in ease and plenty, dole out the merest pittance for the support, we say not of missionaries to the heathen, but of the men who give up time, strength, and worldly prospects, to preach to them the unsearchable riches of Christ.

## CLASS MEETINGS.

---

No part of Methodist economy is more highly prized by the spiritually minded, more disrelished by the worldly part of our membership, and more misrepresented by our enemies, than Class Meetings. The present generation of Methodists would do well to notice the light in which this means of grace was viewed by Mr. Wesley. On February 15, 1742, "the chief of the society in Bristol" having met together to devise ways and means to liquidate a chapel debt, one of their number, Captain Foy, suggested that the best method was for each member to pay a penny a week. "But many of them," said one, "have not a penny to give." "True," said the Captain: "then put ten or twelve of them to me. Let each of these give what they can weekly, and I will supply what is wanting." Others proposed to do likewise, and Mr. Wesley divided the whole society upon this principle. On calling upon the members at their houses to collect the pennies, the "leaders," as the Captain and his associates were called, found some of the members walking disorderly, and reported the fact to Mr. Wesley, who exclaimed, "This is the very thing we wanted. The leaders are the persons who may not only receive the contributions, but also watch over the souls of their brethren." On the 25th of March following, Mr. Wesley conferred with "several earnest and sensible men" in London, on the difficulty he realized in becoming acquainted with the members under his care. After thoroughly canvassing the subject, they concluded that nothing better could be done than to imitate the course

adopted by the Bristol brethren. "This," says Mr. Wesley, "was the origin of our classes in London, for which I can never sufficiently praise God; the unspeakable usefulness of the institution having ever since been more and more manifest."

As soon as practicable this plan was adopted all over the kingdom. The leaders found it expedient to meet their classes in a particular place, as they could not spare the time to visit the members weekly at their own houses, where, indeed, some of them could not be met on account of the hostility of "masters, mistresses, or relations." Besides, they were liable to interruptions from company; and, above all, exhortations, encouragements, and reproofs could be more profitably administered in a class *meeting*, than in a leader's visit to every member's house.

The advantages resulting from this arrangement were soon found to be very great. "Many," says Mr. Wesley, "now happily experienced that Christian fellowship of which they had not so much as an idea before. They began to bear one another's burdens, and naturally to care for each other. As they had daily a more intimate acquaintance with, so they had a more endeared affection for, each other. And speaking the truth in love, they grew up into him in all things, who is the Head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, increaseth unto the edifying of itself in love."

As might be expected, the class meeting was not established, as an organic part of Methodism, without opposition. Some considered it as a restraint upon their liberties—some did not like to speak in company—some considered it a human invention, having no scriptural authority. To these Mr. Wesley replied, "There is no Scripture against it. . . . There is much Scripture for it, even all those texts which enjoin the substance of those various duties whereof this is only an indifferent circumstance, to be determined by reason and experience. The Scripture, in most points, gives only general rules; and

leaves the particular circumstances to be adjusted by the common sense of mankind."

As there were then, as well as now, many leaders who were not remarkable for talents and piety, this was urged as an objection to the class-meeting system. To meet this objection, Mr. Wesley made it the duty of the ministers to change improper leaders to let the leaders frequently meet each other's classes, and especially to let the most experienced and useful leaders visit the classes of other leaders as often as possible; and to make special inquiries of the leaders respecting their mode of leading classes at the leaders' meeting, as well as to make quarterly visitations to all the classes. These regulations are embodied in the Methodist Book of Discipline; and when they are carried out, they never fail to produce the most beneficial results. Our administration in this matter has been defective from the beginning, and yet incalculable benefits have flowed from the services of these official assistants of the minister. "Such leaders as they are," says Mr. Wesley, "it is plain God has blessed their labour."

A thorough examination of the class-meeting system in the light of experience, reason, and Scripture would not result in a reversal of Mr. Wesley's judgment concerning its value and importance.

The importance of Christian communion can scarcely be overstated. Man is a social being. All the faculties of his mind, all the feelings of his heart, show that he was designed for society. He, therefore, who knoweth what is in man, and what his nature requires, has adapted the privileges and responsibilities of his religion to this principle. A social organization for the purposes of religion is recognised under every dispensation of God's mercy and grace. Hence there is so much prominence given to the *church* in the holy Scriptures. The church is a *society*; and a society of which *assemblies* are predicated. These assemblies are both indiscriminate and select. The former are for the more public forms and exercises of divine worship and the ministry of the word,

from which unbelievers are not excluded, but to which they are earnestly invited. In these assemblies, without doubt, there is Christian fellowship; but from the nature of the case it cannot be realized in many of its endearing and edifying forms. These must be sought for in the select meetings of the church—meetings in which few or none are in attendance but the serious and sincere. In these assemblies the members of the church become personally acquainted with each other—a matter of great moment. It was evidently so considered in the apostolic churches. How often does St. Paul repeat the language, “Salute every saint in Christ Jesus.” “All the saints salute you.” “Greet one another with a holy kiss”—the ancient mode of salutation, corresponding with our shaking of hands. Sometimes he gives us a long catalogue of names in the salutatory parts of his epistles. All this shows clearly enough that the primitive believers were not strangers to one another; but that they had a personal knowledge of one another, so intimate as could not have been acquired by a weekly meeting together in an indiscriminate public assembly. In those churches where there are no select meetings the members never become acquainted with each other. Those who move in the same circles in life, or belong to the same profession or secular calling, may, indeed, become acquainted, and form friendships on the ground of such acquaintanceship, and against this we have nothing to say. But Christianity demands something more than this of them that are of the household of faith. Our Christian regards must be more catholic, embracing men of different tastes, attainments, and pursuits, and the rather as *some* manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal—that is, for the common benefit. So that “the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the hand unto the feet, I have no need of you.” There is great advantage in acquiring a personal knowledge of others, as Christians. It reduces our religion to a matter of fact. We see it in the concrete, not merely in the abstract. It is bodied forth as a living reality. The

conflicts and consolations which we experience are thus found to belong to all believers of every grade, and are not peculiar to ourselves or those who belong to the rank or condition in life to which we belong. And there are times when it is of incalculable advantage to us to know that we have an interest in "the common salvation,"—that no temptation hath taken us but such as is common to all the people of God; and this is best ascertained by having personal communion with them.

These select assemblies are necessary for purposes of mutual exhortation, encouragement, reproof, and prayer. Duties of this sort imply a meeting together; and the performance of them is incompatible with the character of an indiscriminate assembly. They cannot, therefore, be attended to without some such an arrangement as the class meeting. We presume few will affirm that Christians do not need prompting to duty, and encouragement in its discharge. The apostle evidently considered it no superfluous service. "Take heed, brethren," says he, "lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. *But exhort one another daily*, while it is called to-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." His language implies a systematic discharge of this duty. And this is still more explicitly brought out in another passage: "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." He thus inculcates a meeting together, a watchful oversight of each other, and mutual exhortations. A perfect picture of a Methodist class.

Were there no record or injunction concerning the holding of such meetings in the primitive church, we should feel sure that such meetings were held. The genius of Christianity forbids a contrary supposition. The Christian dispensation is far more expansive and communicative than the Jewish. It is far better adapted to develop the principle of fellowship and co-operation

than the latter. And yet in Jewish times, "they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." And it is worthy of remark that, in some form or other, *experience meetings*, as they are sometimes called, have been held in every age of the church. There is a yearning for fellowship in the pious bosom; and where there are the instincts of the spiritual life, they will seek and find development. Select meetings for Christian communion were held in the patristic churches. In the dark ages of popery, whenever the principle of true religion broke forth in any place, it followed the same direction and obeyed the same law. Separation and solitariness were fatal to its existence. Since the Reformation there is not a church that has not illustrated the sentiment. Even in those communions which decry this means of grace, whenever a religious awakening or revival takes place among them, nothing is more natural than to have such meetings in requisition. The simplicity and earnestness which obtain on those occasions require this return to primitive usage; and we cannot but think its perpetual observance would prevent the formality, inertness, lukewarmness, worldly-mindedness, and backsliding, which mark the course of those professing Christians who forsake the assembling of themselves together for the special purpose of Christian communion.

The maintenance of ecclesiastical discipline is of the last importance. Without this the church will be like a field without fences, exposed to invasion from every quarter, and liable to be trodden down by man and beast. The evils resulting from the neglect of discipline are but too obvious, and need not engage our present attention.

By discipline we mean all those acts of personal instruction, admonition, reproof, and censure, as well as suspension and excommunication, which may be necessary for the welfare of the church in general and of the members in their individual character. It has to do with the

prevention of evil as well as its cure ; and not less with the promotion of good than the prevention of evil. It is a matter of high concernment for the pastor and his flock ; for both parties are involved in the responsibility of its exercise.

That the people are responsible is beyond dispute. Our Lord says, "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone : if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church : but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." And St. Paul says to the church at Corinth, "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person." To the Thessalonians he writes, "Warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men." "And if any man obey not our word, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." He exhorts the Hebrew believers to "consider one another to provoke unto love and good works," and to "exhort one another." These injunctions involve a disciplinary course binding upon the private members of the church.

But the ministers are held specially responsible for the maintenance of this discipline. This is implied in their scriptural titles : they are called *bishops*, because they have to oversee the society committed to their charge ; *pastors*, because they have to feed, ποιμαίνω, govern, tend, the flock of Christ ; *stewards*, because it is their duty to manage the affairs of the household of faith. Accordingly the apostle writes to the Thessalonians, "We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you ; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." And to the Hebrews he says, "Obey them that have



the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account; that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you." It is needless to multiply passages of this sort, unequivocally making it the duty of ministers to become acquainted, as far as possible, with the people of their charge, and to exercise among them a disciplinary superintendence—personal, vigilant, authoritative, and kind.

Although this wholesome and necessary discipline was laid aside by the indolent successors of the first ministers of the church, and perverted into a spiritual tyranny by the ambitious, yet we meet with its observance among the early Christians. The "fathers" laid great stress upon its maintenance. Thus Ignatius, writing to Polycarp, the bishop of the church in Smyrna, says, "Let not the widows be neglected: be thou, after God, their guardian. Let nothing be done without thy knowledge and consent; neither do thou any thing but according to the will of God; as also thou dost with all constancy. Let your assemblies be more full: inquire into all by name: overlook not the men nor maid servants; neither let them be puffed up, but rather let them be more subject to the glory of God, that they may obtain from him a better liberty."

It may be well made a matter of serious inquiry whether those religious bodies that pay no regard to these apostolic instructions—that maintain no godly discipline—ought to be allowed to take rank as churches of Christ. Mr. Litton, an excellent clergyman of the Church of England, in his book on the Church, p. 516, says, "The exercise of discipline is the true and legitimate expression of the sanctity of a visible church, considered as a society. Hence the great importance of discipline. It is not merely that the absence of it operates injuriously upon the tone and standard of piety within the church—it affects the claim of the society as such to be a legitimate member of the visible church catholic. For every particular church is so called on the supposition of its being

a manifestation, more or less true, of the one holy church, the body of Christ. It is on this ground that some of the Protestant confessions—*e. g.* the Scotch, and our own Homilies—make discipline one of the essential notes of a true church; nor does it appear they are far wrong in so doing. The power of ecclesiastical correction is one of the few which have been conferred upon each Christian society by Christ himself (Matt. xviii. 17.)—it is that which distinguishes a church from a mere casual assemblage of Christians; as indeed it is evident that a community which does not possess the power of admonishing, and, in the last resort, expelling an unworthy member, cannot be called a society in any proper sense of the word.—How essential to the idea of a church the exercise of discipline is, may be seen from the embarrassing contrarieties between theory and practice which the virtual suspension of it in the Church of England is constantly occasioning.”

The duties which we have specified as pertaining to the class meeting are more largely inculcated in the New Testament than the exercises of public prayer and praise, and yet we should not think of dignifying any society with the title of *church* that would neglect the latter, however urgent its claims. The obligation to preserve the ordinances and discipline of the church is binding upon the ministry by divine authority—and they cannot lay it aside without treason and rebellion against the King of Zion. And if it be the pastor’s duty to take a personal oversight of the church, it must be the duty of the church to submit to that oversight. If it be his duty to visit them from house to house, they must not forbid his visits. If it be his duty to “reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine,” they must “endure” the “sound doctrine” and wholesome admonition, and not rebel against legitimate authority, assume independence, or “heap to themselves teachers” of a more accommodating temper. If it be his duty to meet with them in their social assemblies, they must not forsake the assembling of themselves together.

Specific instructions in regard to the mode of exercising this godly discipline in the church, we find not in the Scripture. That it can be, and ought to be, kept up by pastoral visits from house to house, cannot be called in question. But he must be strangely ignorant of the nature and variety of pastoral duties—must have a very erroneous notion of church discipline in particular—who imagines that the work in question can be performed by this means alone. Some pastoral charges are so extensive, that any thing like a regular visitation from house to house is out of the question—the minister cannot visit them all once in a quarter of a year. Besides, were he to visit their houses, he would not find a tithe of them at home. Some of them are in their offices, stores, shops, and fields: some of them, should they be at home, are not in circumstances to receive a visit: some of them are servants, who have not command of their own time, and can rarely be brought by this method under pastoral oversight. We write from experience; but it requires no experience to ascertain these facts—a little reflection on the nature of the case is sufficient. How then shall the discipline of the church be extended to all its members? Mr. Baxter endeavored to do it by visiting from house to house, but found that by this method he “was not able to speak to one of very many” of his people, even once a year. And, alas! says he, “how small a matter is it to speak to a man once only in a year, and that so cursorily as we must be forced to do, in comparison of what their necessities require! Yet are we in hope of some fruit of this much; but how much more might it be, if we could but speak to them once a quarter, and do the work more deliberately!” Baxter lived in an age when religion was exceedingly low—when vital piety was denounced as puritanical fanaticism; and there were very few who feared the Lord, and spake often one to another on the great matters of religion. Had he lived a century later, with what ardour would he have taken hold of those measures and appliances by which the great interests of Christian fellowship and church discipline have, for the

past hundred years, been maintained in the Methodist churches! Baxter's great *desideratum* is a Methodist class meeting. It is just such an assembly as that of which the apostle speaks—just such as Polycarp must have had at Smyrna—just such as Baxter would have rejoiced to have at Kidderminster. It is the only institution by which mutual exhortations, reproofs, and encouragements may be generally administered, and the only one by which the minister can acquire a personal acquaintance with his flock, and exercise a thorough superintendence among them. By means of the "leaders," who are his assistants, he keeps up a constant intercourse with his members: in the "leaders' meetings" he ascertains who among them are sick or in trouble, and need consolation, and who are negligent or disorderly, and need special admonition or censure. By visiting all the classes quarterly, he comes in personal contact with the bulk of the membership, and under circumstances, too, as free as possible from embarrassment or restraint. It is thus an institution by which the wholesome regimen of the church can be effectively preserved; and if it be the duty of the ministry to maintain that regimen in the most effective manner, it requires no argument to prove that it is the duty of the membership to submit to the discipline thus exercised.

Class meetings are sometimes called a prudential means of grace. We suppose that implies an institution dictated or prescribed by prudence. And certainly, we consider nothing more prudent than its observance. But if it means an institution dictated by mere human prudence, in contradistinction to the institutions of Christianity, which were ordained by divine authority, we cannot admit the definition. The essence of a class meeting does not consist in the number of members, the times and places of assembling together, the precise order of religious exercises, and the like. These points, we admit, are of a prudential character, in the latter of the aforementioned senses of the term. The essence of public worship does not consist in points of this nature, though there is

no public worship in the neglect of them. We do not say that public worship is a prudential institution, because it is merely by human authority that we meet in certain places, and at certain hours, and in a certain order, read, and preach, and sing, and pray. To offer prayers and praises in a public manner is divinely enjoined, though the precise method of doing it is left to the discretion of the church. So the exercises of Christian fellowship, and the maintenance of church discipline, and pastoral oversight—which constitute the essence of a class meeting—are of positive divine obligation, though the precise method of meeting the obligation to discharge those duties, is left as an open question to the church.

When, therefore, it is said that we make attendance upon a prudential or a mere human institution a test of membership in the church of God, we deny the charge. We do no such thing. We make attendance upon public worship a test of membership in the church, though it is nowhere stated in the Scripture that we must meet at two or three set hours on Sunday for that purpose. So we make attention to Christian fellowship and church discipline essential to membership, though the Scripture nowhere specifies how frequently, and in what order, we shall meet together for that purpose.

The Bible does not state how far delinquency may be tolerated in regard to attendance either upon public worship or class meeting, before censure or excommunication shall take place. Nor does the church. The spirit of both the church and the Bible requires attendance on all the means of grace at every opportunity. And yet, expulsion is not the penalty for every wilful omission of duty. The grand design is to save men's lives, and not to destroy them. A weekly attendance at class meeting is doubtless enjoined by the Discipline, and those who regard the injunction rarely fail to profit by it. But this is not an absolute test of membership. A single omission to attend class no more subjects a man to expulsion than a single omission to attend the celebration of the Lord's supper, though a man may not wilfully

neglect either without suffering spiritual loss. No precise number of delinquencies is specified beyond which a defaulter shall not be allowed to proceed without censure or arrest. Cases of this sort—unlike scandalous offences—must be left very much to the discretion of the church. The following course seems to be agreeable to the spirit and principles of the gospel. 1. Let the delinquent be tenderly but faithfully admonished by his leader. 2. Let the pastor visit him to ascertain his reasons for non-attendance, to remove his objections, to bring him to a sense of his duty, and to stir him up to its discharge. 3. Let these visits be repeated, if possible, and at sufficient intervals to allow of thought, reflection, and determination, as some minds are slow in their operation, and this is a case in which considerable latitude may be allowed. 4. After several weeks or months have elapsed, according to circumstances, let the delinquent be summoned before the society of which he is a member, or a select number of them, to show why he does not attend his class. In nine cases out of ten, after the steps we have specified have been taken, the delinquent will not appear before the society or the committee. In that event the act of excommunication on the part of the church is but little more than a ratification of the delinquent's own act. But if he should appear, he may be able to show, to the satisfaction of the society or committee, that some cause other than contumacy, or a want of proper regard to the institutions of the church, occasions his neglect, and then of course, his standing in the church is not affected thereby. If, however, he can show no such cause, and will make no promise of amendment, the church would be as derelict as he, were it not to disown an individual so impracticable and insubordinate. But even in that case—so sacredly are the rights of membership guarded by the church—the delinquent has the right of appeal from this decision to a superior court. If the decision be affirmed by the court of appeals, we cannot see why it ought not to be final. Surely he must have strange notions of personal rights, and ecclesiastical prerogatives,

who can suppose that the former have been invaded, and the latter extended beyond the limitation of Scripture and reason, when a delinquent member has been disowned by such a process as this. For our own part, we are not yet prepared to pull down all the fences, and turn the "field which the Lord hath blessed" into a common.

Some, perhaps, may expect us to notice the charges brought against the class meeting founded upon its alleged similarity to the popish confessional. But we rarely pay attention to wilful misrepresentation and malicious slander. And we should not say a word on this point, had not the gross misrepresentation in question been, at least in a qualified way, endorsed by one who is not to be ranked with the common herd of the vilifiers of Methodism. Mr. Isaac Taylor, after stating that "the actual mischiefs resulting from class meetings are probably much less than theoretically they would seem likely to produce, and must be accounted smaller evils by far than those of which Methodism has been the cure"—a marvellously liberal admission, for which we know not how to be sufficiently grateful—after this sage reflection, observes, "Nevertheless a religious meeting thus constituted, and thus directed, will not merely fail of accomplishing what ought to be its purposes, but it can scarcely fail to give that wrong—because *retorted*—direction to the religious affections whence spring most of the disorders and irregularities that rob the gospel of its honours." On reading this passage, any one that has ever been in a class meeting would naturally exclaim, "The man is utterly ignorant of the institution—he does not know what he is writing about!" Mr. Taylor, however, does not leave us to conjecture. See how he demonstrates his ignorance:—

"What could Mr. Wesley imagine would be the consequence of instructing his class leaders to demand of each member an unreserved exposure of a week's sins and temptations? What is it that could be the product of such disgorgements when each was solemnly enjoined, with a remorseless disregard of delicacy, of reserve, of

diffidence, to pour forth, before all, the moral ills of the past seven days? May there not be some ground for the comparative harmlessness of auricular confession? The gross-minded and the shameless will be prompted by egotism and by a bad ambition to discharge the week's accumulations of their bosoms very copiously; but it is certain that the sensitive, whose consciences are the most alive to feelings of healthful compunction in the recollection of sin, will not, until the system itself has spoiled them, be able to bring themselves up to any such pitch of ingenuousness: those who should be silent will be loquacious—those who might speak will violate their best feelings if they do. It is not easy to imagine how it can be otherwise, so long as Wesley's institutions are literally complied with; but it is probable that that good sense and better feeling which so often comes in to exclude the practical absurdities attaching to a theory, have availed, and do constantly avail, for good in this instance of the class-meeting confessional." *Wesley and Methodism*, p. 230-232.

We were going to *italicize* particular portions of this paragraph, but that is unnecessary, as it is a tissue of falsehood and misrepresentation, from beginning to end. It is withal so silly and preposterous, that we are as much at a loss to deal with it as with his supposition that there are "beings around us not more intelligent than apes or than pigs, that have no liberty ordinarily to infringe upon the solid world,—nevertheless, chances or mischances may, in long cycles of time, throw some (like the Arabian locust) over his boundary and give him an hour's leave to disport himself among things palpable." P. 30. Any man that can put forth such drivelling as this, as a philosophical explanation of ghost-story mysteries and marvels, must be allowed a large margin when he is descanting on the mischiefs of Methodist class meetings.

He seems to have in his eye those obsolete societies which Mr. Wesley called "Bands"—of them he gives a monstrous caricature—and fathers the "apes and pigs" of his own imagination upon the venerable subject of his



Janus-faced volume. Where did he ascertain that class leaders are instructed "to demand of each member an unreserved exposure of a week's sins and temptations?" How did he find out that there are any gross-minded and shameless persons who attend class meeting, egotistically and ambitiously "discharging the week's accumulations of their bosoms very copiously?" He did not ascertain this by his own eyes and ears, in the class meeting—for he gives abundant evidence that he was never in a class meeting in his life—he did not learn it from Methodist works that treat on this subject—and he could hardly have acquired his information from those who are in the habit of attending class meetings, for they know the charge is as baseless as it is injurious—alike outrageous of truth and charity. As such, we give it a summary denunciation and dismissal—leaving its retractation, with that of his other numerous misrepresentations, to his sense of justice and magnanimity.

Mr. Taylor deprecates the attendance of the young upon the "confessional" which he has conjured up—and so do we; but we most heartily recommend pastors and parents to take the children of the church to the class meeting, that they may be early subjected to its salutary regimen. When there, they should never be passed over by the leader; but rather encouraged to speak of the exercises of their minds on the subject of religion, so that suitable instructions, admonitions, and encouragements might be administered to them. We especially exhort parents to set before their children an example of punctual attendance: so will they learn to appreciate the excellence of this institution of the church, avail themselves of its advantages, and falsify the predictions of its foes, by transmitting it intact to the generation that shall follow. Let pastors be more frequent and regular in their visitations of the classes, let the leaders be the right sort of men, and class meetings cannot fail to promote the edification of the body of Christ.

---

*Published, for the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, by John Early,  
Richmond, Va., and Louisville, Ky.*

THE  
LABYRINTH OR POPISH CIRCLE.

---

BY EPISCOPIUS.

---

I. *The Papists cannot point out that true Church which cannot err.*

The principal and fundamental article which the Papists have always in their mouths, and on which they mainly rely, that the Church of Rome cannot err, is a labyrinth from which they cannot extricate themselves. For, 1. They are not able to declare, or intelligibly to explain, *what it is that constitutes the church that cannot err.* 2. It is impossible for them to produce any demonstrative argument by which they can satisfy themselves, or any other impartial person, that the church (I say not the *Roman*) cannot err. And here is the proof of both these assertions: As to the *first*, I ask the Papist, “When you say that the church, even that of Rome, cannot err, what do you mean by the *church*? Do you mean *all Christians in general*, who receive Jesus Christ for their Saviour, and who submit to his holy precepts, and that no one of these can err?” This conclusion he will undoubtedly deny: for he will say, every one, separately considered, is liable to error, as well as all of them conjointly; because all are members of one body, that must have a visible head, from which all ought to receive spiritual life, senses, and holy affections:—Be it so, what then? “Do you think that the cardinals, archbishops, priests, and doctors, are the church?” This again the

Papist will deny, since all, and each singly, may err, for the reason already given.

"By the *church*, then," I again ask, "do you understand a *general council*, consisting of cardinals, bishops, and doctors, as representing the whole multitude of Christians, of whom this council is the head?" To this question he will reply in the affirmative. But this ~~being~~ granted, although it is founded in no reason, I will inquire further: "Do you believe that this council, as ~~the~~ head of the church, cannot err, however it may be convoked, and whatever may be decreed in it?" By no means, he will say: it must be convoked legitimately. I ask, "By whom?" By the Roman pontiff, he will reply. Let this also be conceded, although it is without reason, and against the practice of the first general councils, I put another question: "Is a council, when thus legitimately convoked, that church which cannot err in its decrees and decisions? And does it constitute that head of the church which cannot fall into error?"

In determining this point, he will feel some hesitation; so I shall proceed to question him thus: "Suppose that this council decrees any thing without the consent, nay, contrary to the judgment and dignity, of the pope himself, will it not err in that?" Here the Papist must be wholly at a loss. For it is notorious that divers ancient councils, both particular and general, have made decrees contrary to the judgment of the Roman pontiff, and such as diminished his dignity. This is apparent from many African councils, and likewise from the fourth general council at Chalcedon, as well as from many others. It is also evident, that at the general council of Constance, which was held in the year 1414, and convened by Pope John XXIII., or according to others, XXIV., and at which more than a thousand fathers, attached to the Church of Rome, and among them more than three hundred bishops, were present, it was decreed by unanimous consent, *that a general council was above the pope*; and therefore that it was in the power of the council to expunge popes from the records of the church, and so degrade

them from their office. And accordingly that council did degrade three popes, who then exercised the pontificate, and among them Pope John himself, who had convoked the council, because of fifty-four, or according to others, seventy-one, shameful crimes of which he was guilty, among which were these two—that he openly denied the immortality of the soul, thinking that men died like beasts, and that there was neither heaven nor hell: all which appears in the records of its eleventh session.

Here the Papist will be obliged to say one of two things—either “that such a general council is the church that cannot err, even when it decrees any thing contrary to the pope, and to the prejudice of his dignity,” as was done by this council, or “that such a council is not a true church, and therefore that it is capable of error.”

If he affirms the first, he will find himself involved in a Gordian knot; for he will oppose the greater part of the popish doctors, and especially the Jesuits, who assert not only that the “pope is above a council,” but also that this Council of Constance is on that point to be rejected, in which it is decreed “*that the pope is inferior to a council*,” as is manifest from Cardinal Ballarmin, and others. Besides, he will thus be obliged expressly to confess, that the Roman pontiff, who has succeeded to the authority and power of St. Peter, is not the supreme head of all churches; and, by consequence, that the pope of Rome may err in matters of faith, and depart from the truth.

If he affirms the second,—“that such a council as that of Constance is not the church, and therefore that it is capable of error,”—he falls into a new labyrinth. For then he contradicts not only councils, but also many different churches and popish doctors, and expressly the most ancient college of the Sorbonne in France, which by some is called the *eldest daughter of the church*, and which, with the greater part of the French churches, approves and defends this decree of the Council of Constance.

But let us allow that he may find no great difficulty in this point, yet he remains entangled in this dilemma,

that still he does not know, and cannot point out, that church which he asserts cannot err. For if a general council is not the church, or if it be possible to err, and it does actually err, when it decrees any thing against the pope, or without his approbation, let him show me what it is that constitutes a church which is not liable to error. Perhaps he will say "that a council is the church when it agrees with the pope, or is confirmed by him;" but this is a new labyrinth. For it may come to pass, and has indeed often happened, that the greater part of a council may not vote with the pope. Suppose, then, that the majority of a council judges and decrees something which the pope disallows; or that the pope agrees with the minority:—which party in this case constitutes the church? *Not the majority*, a Papist must admit, because it is opposed to the pope. Does then *the minority* in such a council constitute the church? What show of reason, what semblance of truth is there in this? Is it only because the pope is with it? Then the pope is the church; for if those few members of the council constitute the church because the pope takes their side, then if there were only two, who should judge contrary to a thousand others, the two, with the pope, would constitute the church! And why do I say *two*? Even were there only ONE, nay, were there none at all, the matter would come to the same result—the pope alone would be both the first and last, and the whole church which cannot err, even though he were the greatest knave possible—nay, more, not only a heretic, but an atheist who denied the immortality of the soul, and heaven and hell, as Pope John XXIII., of whom we have already spoken, and who, on that account, was deposed by the Council of Constance, with so severe a sentence that he was never afterward to be esteemed a pope, as appears from the eleventh and twelfth sessions.

Behold, then, in how intricate and inextricable a labyrinth the Papist is entangled, and that in a question which affects the first and chief foundation of his religion! For to this day he cannot show what that church

is which cannot err, unless he contradicts many Catholic churches and doctors; nor can the mind of man devise any means of extricating him from this labyrinth, and bringing him into a direct path. *For who shall resolve and determine this question without error?*

If the pope or the council must decide it, they must do it either separately or conjointly. Separately they cannot determine it, because neither of them can remove the subject of debate between them. For as long as it does not appear which of these two is the true church which cannot err, neither party can decide the question with a peremptory and infallible judgment; and if either of the two should claim this right for itself, such an assumption would be a subject of just suspicion to the opposite party; and the arrogating party would in reality be a self-constituted judge in its own cause.

In like manner, both of them conjointly cannot settle the question. For if either of the two parties should surrender its right to the other, it would be guilty of a crime. For it is unlawful to deliver to another the right of supreme authority over the church; and it is the imperative duty of him to whom it belongs, to maintain it. By such a surrender, also, either party would contravene all the decrees of those councils which have determined either that a council is above the pope, or that the pope is above a council.

But suppose this to be now done, and the parties to be now for the first time agreed, yet, it would follow either that the Church of Rome had been in error for a number of centuries, and that in so fundamental an article; or that she had, at least, remained uncertain and doubtful, not knowing what to determine concerning this question. The abyss is without bottom into which the Romish Church to this day has been plunged, and with her all those who think her to be the only church out of whose pale there neither is, nor ought to be, any salvation; and let any one of her adherents come forward, who, with any appearance of truth and solid reason, can extricate himself and them from this labyrinth.

II. *That it is impossible for the Papist to demonstrate from the Holy Scriptures that the head of his church cannot err.*

But let us allow that the Papist is able to assign a head to his church, (which, however, as we have just proved, he cannot do,) by what argument, I pray, will he assure both himself and others, that this head of his church cannot err? In every method by which he may attempt to demonstrate this, he will perceive that he falls into another, and still more intricate labyrinth. For in order to be assured that this head of his church cannot err, it is necessary either that he resolve to believe it implicitly, and without reason, or that he should attempt to prove it out of the Holy Scriptures, from Christian fathers, or from reason.

If he resolves to believe this dogma himself, and wishes others also to believe it implicitly, then all discussion will be useless; and if another, on the contrary, is resolved not to believe it, for no better reason, then they are equals, and each remains under the dominion of his own foolish and carnal will. However that may be, his faith, being a mere personal opinion, is not such a faith as cannot err, and, consequently, he cannot rely upon it with any certainty.

If he endeavours to prove his proposition from the Scriptures, he becomes the more entangled. For, 1st. It cannot be known, according to his opinion, whether the Scriptures themselves are the word of God, except the true church give us a previous assurance of this fact. But if this be so, as he actually believes, and according to the rules of his church is bound to believe, he cannot bring arguments out of the Scriptures for the purpose of demonstrating that the true church cannot err, or by which he may prove that his own church is that true church incapable of error. 2dly. Let it even be conceded to him, that he may produce arguments from the Scriptures, then he will find himself much more deeply perplexed. For immediately a question will arise concerning *the true sense of Scripture*. But who, by an infallible judgment,

shall decide the question thus moved, viz. whether the Scriptures assert that the church cannot err? Shall his church decide it? This she can by no means do, because the question is concerning the sense of Scripture—whether the Scripture does certainly give the church this right and power of judging with authority and infallibility. But, 3dly. Granting likewise, for the sake of argument, that the Scripture gives the power to the true church, (which in fact it does not give,) yet this question will still remain to be decided, “Which church is the true one to which this right is granted?” Now what church has the power of infallibly deciding this question? Is it the Church of Rome? But the question is agitated no less concerning her than all other churches, and she can no more pronounce judgment in her own cause, than can any other church with regard to itself.

That the argument from the succession can have no place here we shall afterward prove. In the mean time it is impossible for the Papist to escape out of this labyrinth.

III. *That the Papist is not able to prove from the fathers, that the head of his church cannot err.*

If the Papist attempts to prove this from the writings of the fathers, he enters into the same, and indeed into a more intricate labyrinth. *Into the same*, I say; for immediately this question will arise, “From what does it appear that the right of deciding this, and other controversies in religion, belongs to the writings of the fathers?” He will enter also into a *more intricate labyrinth*; for, 1st. It may be asked, “Which of the fathers, and which of their writings, are meant?” If certain of the fathers and certain of their writings be specified, it will be asked, 2dly. “Wherefore these more than others, and why not all?” For whoever he be that thus distinguishes between the writings of the fathers, he himself pronounces a decision by this very act—and who has the authority thus to decide?

But let us concede that no objection of this kind shall be urged; yet, 3dly. These questions will still remain, “Are those writings which are attributed to the fathers,



in reality the writings of those men whose names they bear?" May they not, in course of time, have been vitiated by carelessness, fraud, and deceit? Are they not mixed with the supposititious books of other writers, as to this day we know to be the fact with the writings of Tertullian, Justin Martyr, Jerome, Augustin, Chrysostom, &c.? Who shall distinguish the genuine from the spurious and adulterated? For that office, are required skill in languages, close reading, an acute judgment, and an accurate examination of the words and phraseology of the different fathers.

But all dispute concerning even these points being waived, then, 4th. The question will be this, "Must we believe and admit, as true, those things which the fathers have believed and written? If you deny this, I ask, 5thly. "Why do you receive one of their assertions, rather than another?" If you say, Because all the fathers agree respecting that which you receive, then these new questions arise :

(1.) "Why are not all things in which the fathers agree among themselves, held by the Roman Church as certain and indubitable." (2.) "What are those things in which the fathers agree among themselves, and which are to be embraced?" To determine this, all the Greek and Latin fathers must be thoroughly and most attentively read, from the beginning to the end, which will be the labour of many years. (3.) If, in this investigation, any doubt shall arise, either concerning the meaning of their writings, (as a doubt sometimes arises respecting the meaning of the Holy Scriptures themselves,) or concerning those phrases or forms of speech which were in use in their time, and which are now used and understood differently, when shall we come to a conclusion?

But not to insist even on this; since the fathers agree among themselves in this, that they wish neither their own, nor any other human writings, to be regarded as free from error, but only the canonical books;—nay, since they plainly confess that it is possible for them to err, and consequently that they desire not that their

writings should be received as not liable to error, but expressly require them to be proved by the word of God, and desire that they may be rejected, if they agree not with it;—what then must be done? What security can their writings afford against error? Truly, none at all. Nay, if we use them for this end that we may by them be fully assured in matters of faith, we employ them in a manner contrary to the intention of the fathers themselves, and therefore in opposition to that plain and express protestation and interdict in which they all agree, that the Holy Scriptures are the only writings not liable to error.

IV. *That the same cannot be proved by argument.*

If the Papist applies himself to reason to establish his favourite position, (that his church cannot err,) he runs out of one labyrinth into another. For, 1st. What reason will he receive as valid, when in the principal article of his faith, he not only does not listen to reason, but gives no credit to the testimony of his outward senses? Can any argument more weighty be used to produce conviction in any one, than is deduced from what we see with our own eyes, what we perceive by our senses when they are in a state of soundness, what we feel and taste? But truly all these things, are matters of small account with the Papist, since he suffers not himself to be induced either by arguments, or by his own senses, to believe that the bread in the eucharist is essentially and substantially bread; nay, since he will give credence to it as an indubitable truth, that one and the same body is in many places at once, and those places far distant from each other; that it remains undivided, notwithstanding it is distant and separate from itself a hundred, or thousands of miles; that one and the same body can, at the same time, be moved in one place, and in another cannot be moved; that one and the same body may meet itself, and move in opposite directions at the same moment of time; that is, at the same time from east to west, and from west to east, upward and downward, forward and backward; that one and the same body may in Holland become hot as fire, while at Rome it remains cold as ice;

may be alive in this country, while it is dead at Venice. If a man will give credit to these things, so directly contrary to the human intellect and to right reason, by what argument, will he be able to convince himself or others concerning any matter whatsoever? They who blush not to question truths so clear, and will obstinately maintain what is so contrary to them, do, so to speak, willingly draw a film over their own eyes, that they may not see. With such men, reasons are like counters, which stand for the amount which any one may please to affix to them.

But allowing that they employ reasons in the controversy; what reasons will they produce on this subject? Will they take them out of the Scriptures? But then the same difficulties will remain which we have already enumerated. Will they employ such reasons as are not drawn from the Sacred Writings? But these may easily and not without just cause be rebutted, and called in question, by other reasons. Now if the church cannot err, this must necessarily proceed from the will and decree of God. But if God wills not the church to be exempt from all danger of error, what reasons can be given to prove irrefragably that the church cannot err? Again, the will and decree of God cannot be known, except from the Sacred Writings, and is not discoverable by human penetration and a course of reasoning. From which it follows, that it is the greatest of absurdities for them to attempt to prove, by reason which may be rebutted and called in question, any thing, which beyond all doubt, and without the least controversy, ought previously to be believed to depend wholly on the mere free will and decree of God.

From these remarks, it is obvious in how intricate a maze the Papists wander about, in respect of the fundamental article of their faith, when they believe nothing but what their church believes, and yet are unable to point out with any certainty, what properly constitutes the church, and who is its head; and if they could even settle these questions, (which it is impossible for them to

do,) they would still find it impossible to prove that the church, much less, that their own church, is incapable of error.

*V. The controversy respecting the succession is useless and endless.*

ANTIQUITY and SUCCESSION is the endless burden of the Papal song, and yet this is worthy of the highest admiration, that the principal declaimers on this topic are those who, perchance, never thoroughly examined the books and histories of the men from whom that antiquity and continued succession must be drawn and supported:—or, if they have examined them, they are by no means fit persons to investigate them without affection or prejudice, since they are accustomed either foolishly to believe by means of some proxy, who in their estimation is most intimately acquainted with the matter, although such person is not unfrequently destitute of all correct knowledge of things:—or, without sense or judgment, they eagerly catch at every word or syllable which they imagine may be rendered at all subservient to their purpose.

How irksome it must be to descend into the arena of disputation with such persons, every one will perceive. For who does not see the great labour that is required to determine questions which are to be demonstrated from the memory of past ages, from various books and histories, and which, even when established by solid reasons so as to close the door to all future exceptions, shall still fail to produce any good effect in the minds of the opposite party!

Wherefore they who inculcate upon the body of the people such matters as these, do nothing but involve them in an inextricable-maze, out of which the unskilful multitude either despair of a happy exit, or, if they have any hope, remain still in the same uncertainty, being fatigued and confused by the too difficult labour of investigation. It is impossible for any other result to follow; and this, indeed, is the most ready and effectual way of acquiring power to lord it over the conscience of simple people, and, having bound them in a Gordian knot, to

persuade them to the belief of any thing. But let us put both these things in a little clearer light. I establish the first by the following argument :—

No man is able to deny that for the asserting of the antiquity not only of the church, but likewise of a continued and uninterrupted succession of bishops in the church, is necessarily required (1) a certain, undoubted, and accurate knowledge both of Latin and Greek authors, and of all the histories which have been written on the subject; and (2) that to this knowledge ought to be added a sound and acute judgment, by which the examiner may discern with exactness, in their pages, the genuine from the spurious and adulterated books, true histories from interpolated ones, and those which have been fabricated by party feelings, passion, and preconceived opinions, from those which have been composed by persons who had no such undue bias or prejudice: so that he may reconcile contrary statements, and faithfully supply defects. Every one must at once perceive what labour, time, and anxiety this would require. Even among the most learned, during the entire space of 1800 years, not one has hitherto been found who was adequate to this weighty performance. Are the uneducated and unskilful common people then, who are considered by the Papists to be unqualified for the examination of any one of the books of the Holy Scriptures, sufficient to undertake and go through this great work—accurately to search all those volumes of ecclesiastical history with which whole barns might be filled and whole ships laden? The laity therefore in the Romish Church, who, laying aside the Holy Scriptures, never cease to prattle about antiquity, and continued succession, betray a mind sufficiently stupid and foolish, because they know nothing more, perhaps much less, about true antiquity and succession, than about the Holy Scriptures, or rather they are alike ignorant of both.

It is true indeed that a catalogue and index of bishops may be easily composed, in which the series and order in which they succeeded each other may be exhibited. But

that is nothing to the purpose; for the Greek Church, the Ethiopic, and others, have composed such catalogues in favour of their several pretensions. "The Church of Constantinople has one," says Bellarmine, "from the emperor Constantine, in an uninterrupted series; and Nicephorus likewise deduces the names of all the bishops, even from the time when the apostle Andrew flourished." Yet Bellarmine, and with him all Papists, deny that the Greeks can of right claim to themselves a proper succession. A succession of persons, therefore, is not deemed to be sufficient; but an additional requisite is, that it should be a legitimate succession, and such a one, that there shall not be found, in the line of the successive bishops, a single heretic, atheist, or apostate.

1. It is required, that it be legitimate; for as the Papal decree has it, (Dist. 79,) "If any one shall be enthroned in the apostolic see, by bribes, by human favour, or by popular or military tumult, without the unanimous and canonical election both of the cardinals and of the inferior clergy, let him not be accounted a successor of the apostles, but of the apostates." 2. It is required that there shall be no heretic in the succession of bishops; for it is on this account, as Cardinal Bellarmine and other popish doctors affirm, that the succession of the Constantinopolitan bishops (those of the Greek Church) is not to be esteemed legitimate, because there have been heretics in the number. (Lib. iv. *De Notis Ecclesiæ*, chap. viii.) If therefore any one wishes to form a correct judgment of the succession of the bishops of Rome, according to the canons of the Papists themselves, he must ascertain both these points with the greatest certainty.

But how is this possible? Who can know, without a shadow of doubt, whether all her bishops obtained the episcopate lawfully? Did those of them who gained their dignity in the succession by simony, that is, by money and gifts, (as Simon Magus wished to do,) or by force, intrigues, factions, bribery? But further, if any person desirous of becoming acquainted with their history,

shall discover that even the writers most devoted to the claims of the Church of Rome frankly confess, not only that one or two, but that many different bishops of Rome attained to the pontifical dignity, who were convicted of open heresy, and accounted (by these chief writers of their own church) impious scoundrels, atheists, schismatics, ruffians, and debauchees, who by gifts and bribes, by force and factions, without any previous choice, or subsequent approbation on the part of the clergy, introduced themselves into the succession by foul machinations and dishonest stratagems, by deceit, and by the influence of their harlots and kept-mistresses—what diligent inquirer, I ask, can extricate himself from that maze of perplexities in which a knowledge of these circumstances will have involved him? If you say, “Credence in this matter is to be given to the best and to the most faithful historians,” you fall into a new labyrinth; for I ask, who are those historians, and by what are they to be distinguished? Why should any one, by such a remark, derogate from the credit of the Popish writers? For they cannot be deemed heretics, or hostile to the Church of Rome, who were most subservient to it; and some of these writers were the greatest flatterers of the popes, and the most zealous abettors of the Papal dignity. The Papist must therefore allow that writers of this character must have been constrained, by the undoubted and known truth of the thing itself, to admit these facts into their writings. And suppose, for the sake of argument, that they who have recorded these corruptions had not been writers devoted to the Papacy, what just reason can be given why they should not be entitled, as faithful writers, to equal credit with the advocates of the pope, and of his assumptions? Friendship is as powerful as enmity to prevent an author from recording the truth. He who would write a faithful history for future ages ought to be free from all bias; but by what reason can we persuade ourselves, and convince our own minds, that there has ever been any such writer, especially if we live not in the same age with him? In this case, however,

the testimony against the integrity of the succession of the Roman bishops is given by writers whose prejudices were all in favour of the Papacy.

He who divests himself of preconceived opinions, and who considers these things without prejudice, will clearly see that those who endeavour to shelter themselves under the plea of antiquity and succession, involve themselves in a labyrinth in which they are easily entangled, from which it is scarcely possible for them to be freed.

VI. *Truth is to be preferred to antiquity and succession.*

But granting that any could establish the antiquity and succession contended for, what would this prove with regard to the chief point at issue? Nothing at all. For when antiquity and the succession of persons are proved, the question concerning TRUTH will remain undecided. If antiquity and succession are not in conjunction with truth, how, I ask, can they avail in settling the question before us? Antiquity is not the cause of truth, much less is succession; and if antiquity and succession ought necessarily to be joined with truth, then truth is especially to be known before all things else; of which, while any man is ignorant, so long must he continue in suspense. To give an instance in elucidation:—Should a man find money which he ascertains with certainty to have been coined many ages before, he may yet remain in doubt whether it is made of good or base metal. Antiquity is something entirely different from goodness; nor does a wicked person cease to be wicked because he is aged. It is not every ancient custom that is good; and this is the reason why the fathers, when speaking of true antiquity and succession, wish us chiefly to regard that succession which is connected with genuine doctrine and truth, especially when the combat is waged with those who either wholly or partly reject the Scriptures.

Thus Gregory Nazianzen says, τὸ μὲν γὰρ ὁμογνώμων καὶ ὁμόθετος: “The one is of the same judgment with truth, and sits on the same throne: the one has the name, the other has the reality of succession.” St. Am-



brose also observes, "He who has not the faith of Peter, inherits nothing from Peter, and vainly boasts of succeeding Peter."

This matter is so clear, that even the learned Jesuit Cardinal Bellarmine acknowledges these two things:—1. That the argument concerning succession is not adduced by his party to prove that the church in which this succession may be found is, on this account, to be considered the true church, but only to prove that that is not the true church in which such succession is wanting. 2. That antiquity and continued succession avail nothing to the Greek Church, or at least to that of Constantinople, nor even to all the Eastern patriarchates, for proving them to be the true church, because the thread of legitimate succession among them has been broken by some bishops having been heretical. From these remarks it clearly follows that when the succession is made out, the principal question respecting truth remains still to be determined. For when an uninterrupted succession is proved, if it cannot be infallibly collected and concluded that the church which has such succession is the true church—and if it must be rendered apparent that no heresies or heretical bishops have interposed in the succession—reason itself dictates, that succession is introduced to little or no purpose, unless we are fully informed respecting that which constitutes the truth in doctrine; for while truth is unknown, it is impossible to determine what is, or what is not heresy.

But who shall show us the truth, and give us the fullest assurance of it? Shall the true church? But where or which is that? This cannot be shown. For after the succession of persons has been proved, it is still neither certain nor indubitable that the church which has the succession has the truth on its side, or has always been exempt from heresy; and by consequence, whether it has the right and power of determining that it is the true church. What church then is it which will infallibly point out to us and say, "This is true; and that on the contrary is heretical?" For a church that is

without the succession, cannot, according to the Jesuits, do this, nor can even that church which has the succession, as appears from the principles already laid down. What end is there then to all this? It is impossible for a Papist to untie this knot. To this I also add, let it be granted that no heretical bishops have intervened in the line of succession, but only such as have by force, faction, popular tumult, or bribes, intruded themselves into the apostolical see, where then, I inquire, will be the succession? For must we believe that holy and saving truth can better consist with these nefarious practices, than with heresy or error? Nay, further—if it is a matter of historical record, that for fifty or eighty years together, there have been two or three popes at the same time: one of them denying to another the very name of Christian, reproaching each other with the appellations of heretic and antichrist, and each pronouncing the other an unlawful pope; that one cut off two of the fingers of his predecessor; dug up the bodies of others from their graves, and having insulted their ashes, ordered them to be cast into the Tiber—that sometimes all the three popes together were condemned and degraded by a General Council, as false popes, heretics and ungodly wretches, not even to be reckoned in the number of Christians—and that nevertheless many bishops and clergy were ordained by these false popes—in what manner is the broken thread of the succession to be united? For, if it be said, for example, “That the pope is to be accounted a true one, who, in the time of the Council of Constance, was by common consent put in the place of the three popes deposed by that council, and who succeeded to the last deceased legitimate pope, the apostolical see having in the mean time been vacant, and usurped by force;” he will enter into a new labyrinth, because many of the popish doctors, Bellarmine in particular, and all the Jesuits, deliver and urge it as their opinion, that the Council of Constance is, in this respect, to be regarded as unlawful, inasmuch as it decrees that a council is above the pope, and because it was not approved by that

impious man, Pope John XXIII. or XXIV., who had convened it, and was by its sentence deposed, or by the pope whom the council appointed in his stead. For if this council is not in that respect to be considered a lawful one, how then shall a lawful succession be established? Would the approval of so infamous a man as Pope John, who was charged by the council itself with atheism, have rendered this assembly a lawful one? It is shameful to make such an assertion; and it would be much more shameful to assert that the council was unlawful, solely because it was not approved by him. Or would it have been a lawful council, if it had received the approbation of the succeeding pope? But it will indeed appear to be unlawful; because the man who was constituted pope by this council did not say that he and others in similar circumstances with himself were subject to a council; but on the contrary, in imitation of Lucifer, son of the morning, strenuously asserted that he was superior to any council—though it is highly credible that he approved of the decree of the council before he was chosen pope. Now who does not see, in all this, a circle of absurdities? For whichever way you take it, the perplexity presents itself. If the authority of the Council of Constance was not higher than that of the pope, it could not have deposed the pope; in this case, therefore, those infamous popes are to be reckoned among the legitimately succeeding bishops, in a continued succession, which was not interrupted by reason of their heresy, atheism, simony, violence, and other abominable wickedness. On the other hand, if an interruption through these crimes and heresies be granted, then the succession is at once vitiated and destroyed, for the same reason as that which Bellarmine gives to prove that the succession in the Greek Church ought not to be accounted a legitimate one.

He who perceives not that all the Papists are thus intricately entangled in an endless maze of errors, must be wilfully blind. For however the case may stand with regard to the succession, the question respecting *truth* will

always remain.' To what purpose, then, do they enter into so intricate a labyrinth, and employ so much labour in order to prove a succession? They must of necessity arrive at one or the other of these two conclusions—either TRUTH is sufficient to constitute a true church—or it is not. If the former be allowed, why do they attempt to prove the succession through these endless intricacies? But if this be denied, and it be said that truth is not sufficient, what advantage is there in doctrinal truth, if it does not constitute a true church? It is contrary, however, to the nature and property of truth, that it should not constitute a true church, whether those who teach the truth have it from tradition of others or not; or at least cannot show a catalogue of those, in succession, through whom it has been handed down to them. For gold will be gold, although it has been buried in the earth a thousand years. You will perhaps say, "Before I can acknowledge it is gold, some one must teach me that it is really gold." But I ask in return, Is the church to do this for you? Then some one else is still required, through whom I may be assured that the church which affirms that *this is gold*, has the most accurate knowledge of that precious metal, and cannot err respecting it. By whom shall I be thus assured? Here the Papists begin to argue in a circle. We assert the Scriptures to be the truth; and this proposition is conceded to us by the Church of Rome, who yet at the same time contends that it belongs to herself to declare the Scriptures to be the truth. To this I reply, Who shall assure me that when the church affirms this, she speaks what is true? She has not this right, we are told, of infallibly determining, by virtue of her alleged succession, unless it clearly appears that she never fell from the truth; but this can never be rendered apparent to me until I know what is truth. If the church assumes this right of declaring what is truth, she merely chants the same song and runs round the same circle; for she will be at once the plaintiff and the judge in her own cause. Under these circumstances there will be no litigation.

With our argument also, that very noted passage in Tertullian agrees which is so frequently in the mouth of Papists, and which they cite in all their writings, but the sense of which they most egregiously distort. In his book *De Præscript. adv. Heret.*, (chap. xxxii.,) he says, "But if any heresies dare to profess themselves to be of the time of the apostles, that so they may appear to have been delivered by the apostles, we may say,"—(that is, we may in this case demand of those who hold such heresies, to show the succession of which they boast,)—"Let them show the origin of their churches, unfold the order of their bishops, running down from the beginning, so that the first bishop had some of the apostles, or apostolic men who nevertheless continued with the apostles, for his predecessors," etc. In a subsequent passage he says, "Let the heretics feign any such thing," (which is to be remarked as serving our argument,) "yet this pretence will avail them nothing; for their doctrine itself, compared with that of the apostles, will by its diversity and contrariety denounce itself as having had neither any apostle nor apostolic man for its author. For as the apostles would not teach any doctrines which were discordant with each other, so also those who were trained up by them would not publish any thing contradictory to the doctrine of the apostles, except it were those persons who departed from them and taught otherwise. To this rule, therefore, shall those churches appeal," (NOTE THIS WELL,) "which though they can produce none of the apostles or their immediate followers as their founder, on account of their being now daily instituted; yet agreeing in the same faith," (that is, the faith of the apostles and their followers,) "they are not less deemed to be apostolical churches, because of the consanguinity of their doctrine:" that is, according to the style of this Father, because in doctrine they agree with the apostles.

These words of Tertullian, which the Papists do so shamefully pervert, and violently wrest from their proper meaning, obviously confirm our previous remarks. For in them he lays down three things: (1.) That those

churches which have the truth agreeable to the doctrine of the apostles, are not less apostolical than others, although they cannot exhibit their succession; and that they are such for this reason only, because they have the truth on their side.

(2.) That those churches which boast of their succession, and of their origin as having been derived from the apostles, while they cannot demonstrate it, are justly to be rejected, as obtruding upon us false pretences.

(3.) That those churches which prove their succession, whether legitimately or not, are not to be regarded as true churches, unless it appear that their doctrine and that of the apostles are perfectly in unison. It follows then, that the churches which hold the apostolic doctrine, are apostolic churches, although they may be destitute of proof of an uninterrupted succession. This deduction is clearer than the sun in his noontide splendour.

St. Augustin also affirms to the same thing, in a passage of his writings, which the Papists quote in like unfaithfulness, and in a sense as contrary to that father's intention. In a book which he wrote against the Fundamental Epistle of the Manichees, having observed—that he adhered to the catholic church, in which the succession of bishops and priests was regularly deduced, from St. Peter's occupancy of the see down to his own times, he immediately adds these words, which are in entire agreement with the judgment we have expressed: "With you, (the Manichees,) where there is none of these things to invite and detain me, only the sounding pretence of truth is heard, which indeed, were it in reality so manifestly displayed as not to be called in question, ought to be preferred to all those things which induce me to continue in the catholic church." What clearer terms could Augustin have employed to indicate and prove that neither antiquity nor succession can be of the least avail to extricate men from a labyrinth of doubts which they may entertain respecting the true church; but that this office can and ought to be performed by *truth* alone.

VII. *The origin of the labyrinth of difficulties in which the Papists are involved.*

“By this mode of argument,” some will say, “we are indeed involved in the intricacies, but no method is pointed out of untying the Gordian knot.” I reply that to untie the knot will not be found a very difficult operation, if we only attend to its source and origin. It arises from the desire which men have in this world for outward ease and peace, a soft and delicate religion; and to attain this object, they seek for an infallible judge, speaking in the church, who may authoritatively decide all controversies, and to whose award the consciences and tongues of men may be bound, so that none may contradict it; and if any one refuse to acquiesce in the judgment of this infallible personage, he must be subdued by force under penalty of death and the utmost indignation. In a word, they endeavour to convert the church of Christ into a worldly polity, and to that end prohibit the laity and common people from reading the Scriptures only upon the condition, and by the rule of understanding and interpreting them according to the sense of this judge, or with the express proviso that they shall not otherwise be understood by them, although they do actually understand them otherwise themselves.

This is the source and origin of the evil; and as long as no remedy is provided for it, the labyrinth of their errors will remain. I admit, indeed, that at the first sight it may appear plausible that there should be in the church some judge of religious controversies, which otherwise might be regarded as endless. But in truth, this is but the device of these men themselves, who either, greedy of power, desire to establish their spiritual tyranny, or who, loving ease more than truth, study the gratification of their convenience, and shelter themselves partly under a profession of anxiety for the tranquillity of the church, partly under the pretext of simplicity, piety, and humanity. But however plausible the doctrine of the necessity of having an infallible judge of controversies in the church may be, this is clear, that if God, the Father of our Lord Jesus

Christ, had thought it necessary or useful to appoint and continue such a speaking authority in the Christian church, he would have declared it expressly, and would also have clearly and palpably pointed out that judge, and the place where he might always be found, that we might not be deceived, and that in all cases of doubt we might have been recommended to this appointed arbiter as to a sacred asylum. Nay, it is most reasonable to suppose that Christ would first and chiefly have taken care of this, and that the apostles would have urged it before all the articles of faith, because all things ought of necessity to be referred to this tribunal; for by such a judge all questions might have been quickly decided and settled. However, since no such appointment has been made either by Christ or his apostles, this doctrine of an infallible judge in the church can be nothing else than a human invention, and a project supported by worldly tranquillity and convenience, and savouring of tyranny and usurped dominion. And for any one of his own authority to appoint such a judge, is an outrageous audacity, an aggravated high treason against the Divine Majesty, and a device fitted to enslave the whole world in endless error, and to bring it under perpetual condemnation.

As to what the Papists urge, that Christ delivered the keys to Peter, it is too frail a foundation on which to build so grave and weighty an office as that of such a judge. For since this affair is one of such difficulty, and so deeply concerns the whole world, Christ, who came to save the world, would have declared this to be the sense of his words, by saying, "Since I grant this power and right to Peter, I exclude all the rest of the apostles: it is also my further pleasure, that those who succeed Peter at Rome, shall obtain by hereditary right this privilege of supreme judgment; that Peter's successors at Antioch or Jerusalem shall have no share in it, and that all Christians shall be bound to submit themselves to this judge alone, to the end of the world." Thus fully and clearly would our Lord have conveyed the intentions of his mind, in expressions by which his meaning could not have been mistaken



Indeed, in a matter of such high importance, who would have expected any thing less from Christ, who has manifested so tender a regard for mankind? Although the whole Scripture, from beginning to end, had been nothing but a far-fetched allegory, and involved in an unbroken obscurity, yet we could have sustained no injury, so long as an infallible interpreter of its meaning could have been resorted to. Were this alone rendered clear and undoubted, all the rest, however apparently difficult, would be easily explained to us.

VIII. *To judge of truth by the word of God, is the common privilege of every individual.*

Since we see that the Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles have clearly and plainly expressed in the Holy Scriptures all things which are necessary to be believed, done, and hoped by a Christian, since it is likewise their pleasure that the Scriptures should be perused with all diligence, and inquiry made into their meaning by all who delight in the salvation of their souls, and in the way which conduces to it; and that under their guidance an accurate examination should be instituted into all things, and a trial of "all spirits whether they be of God," on pain of eternal condemnation; and since, also, there is not a tittle anywhere extant, in all their writings, of the appointment of any such infallible and speaking judge, who should always exist in their church; and since much less is any information there given of the place where he should be found—we cannot avoid the conclusion, that they who seek after such a judge in the church, are moved in this their desire by considerations which are far from being divine, and that they render themselves guilty of that highest offence and most criminal act, the setting up of a domination and tyranny over the word of God, and over the consciences of mankind.

Far different reasons exist why, in the affairs of this world, judges are appointed, in whose decisions and awards we must acquiesce. For the consciences of men are not bound by the decisions of these men, and every man is at liberty to believe and give his opinion concerning the sen-

tences and judgments they deliver, just as he pleases. A decision by these judges on worldly matters may sometimes be applauded with the lips, when the minds of men bestow upon it no portion of their approbation. And it frequently happens that those sentences and judgments about worldly matters are a long time afterward annulled or amended by decisions quite contrary to those first delivered. But when the matter at issue respects conscience, religion, salvation, eternal life, or eternal death, there ought to be no judge but God himself. If there be any other judge, then he only is to be acknowledged as such to whom God hath expressly and in the most unequivocal manner committed that right. We have, therefore, the strongest reasons for saying that if God has bestowed this privilege on the Church of Rome, then she is the best, nay, the only church; but on the contrary, if it be not evident that God has invested her with the right, then she is the most corrupt and shameful church that can possibly exist on the face of the earth.

Do you ask what is the conclusion of the whole matter? I answer, that the word of God be freely and fearlessly read by all men; that the conscience of no man be bound by the judgment of others; that every man love his brother, and endeavour to instruct him by the best arguments out of the word of God; and that we wait for the time in which the Lord God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, the only Judge of quick and dead, will pass his sentence of life and death. By these means the consciences of men will be preserved free, all Christians will live in amity and peace, and the word of God will be the only rule of the actions of mankind.

# TRUE AND FALSE MINISTERS.

BY CHARLES WESLEY

ELDAD, they said, and Medad, there,  
Irregularly bold,  
By Moses uncommission'd, dare  
A separate meeting hold !  
And still whom none but Heaven will own,  
Men whom the world decry,  
Men authorized by God alone,  
Presume to prophesy !

How often have I blindly done  
What zealous Joshua did,  
Impatient to the rulers run,  
And cried, " My lords, forbid !  
Silence the schismatics—constrain  
Their thoughts with ours t'agree  
And sacrifice the souls of men  
To idol unity !"

Moses, the minister of God,  
Rebukes our partial love  
Who envy at the gifts bestow'd  
On those we disapprove.  
We do not our own spirit know,  
Who wish to see suppress'd  
The men that Jesus' Spirit show,  
The men whom God hath bless'd.

Shall we the Spirit's course restrain,  
Or quench the heavenly fire ?  
Let God his messengers ordain,  
And whom he will inspire :  
Blow as he list, the Spirit's choice  
Of instruments we bless :  
We will, if Christ be preach'd, rejoice,  
And wish the word success.

Can all be prophets then ? are all  
Commissiōn'd from above !  
No ; but whome'er the Lord shall call  
We joyfully approve.  
O that the church might all receive  
The spirit of prophecy,  
And all in Christ accepted live,  
And all in Jesus die !

Master, for thine we cannot own  
The workmen who themselves create,  
Their call receive from man alone,  
As licensed servants of the state :  
Who to themselves the honour take,  
Nor tarry till thy Spirit move,  
But serve for filthy lucre's sake  
The souls they neither feed nor love.

In vain in their own lying words  
The haughty self-deceivers trust ;  
The harvest's and the vineyard's lords  
In vain their true succession boast :

Their lawful property they claim—  
The apostolic ministry;  
But only labourers in name,  
They prove they are not sent by thee.

Who but the Holy Ghost can make  
A genuine gospel minister,  
A bishop bold to undertake  
Of precious souls the awful care?  
The Holy Ghost alone can move  
A sinner, sinners to convert,  
Infuse the apostolic love,  
And bless him with a pastor's heart.

Not all the hands of all mankind  
Can constitute one overseer;  
But spirited with Jesus' mind,  
The heavenly messengers appear:  
They follow close with zeal divine,  
The Bishop great, the Shepherd good,  
And cheerfully their lives resign,  
To save the purchase of his blood.

## APOSTOLICAL SUCCESSION:

A SUMMARY OF OBJECTIONS TO THE MODERN CLAIM.

---

THE subject of these pages is justly deemed solemn and important. The authors of the Oxford "TRACTS FOR THE TIMES" assign to "the Apostolic Succession," and "the Holy Catholic Church," primary rank among the doctrines which it is the object of that remarkable series to revive:\* and such are the aspects in which their theory is presented, that their peaceable neighbours are involved in unsought controversy, or silence is mistaken for an admission of guilt. Ours is not the responsibility of aggression; but we dare not now decline the contest. Allegiance to truth requires us to examine statements which are especially calculated to ruffle the uncautioned mind; but it is our highest ambition to commend a righteous cause, no less by the meekness of charity than by the perspicuity of argument and the force of appeal.

It is obvious that, if the successionists are right, thousands of laborious ministers in all Christian lands are fearfully wrong. Let it not be assumed that these thousands are *recklessly* and *profanely* determined to maintain their position. Multitudes of them have given candid attention to the literature of the so-called Anglo-Catholics, and they are even now prepared to resign their office rather than to disregard the gentlest monitions of the CHIEF SHEPHERD'S voice. But noisy declamation, and ever-

---

\* Advertisement to Volume I., Oxford Tracts.

recurring assertion, will not decide so great a matter; nor ought sincere friendship for any Christian denomination to interfere with the more ardent love which is due to "the Holy Catholic Church," including those, of every name and clime, who are united to Him "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."

Before proceeding, it is necessary to offer a few explanatory remarks. The terms which most frequently occur in the controversy ought to be defined; and the extent of our views, in opposition to Puseyism, ought to be stated.

The word "APOSTLE" literally means *one sent, a legate*. The apostles were, under Christ, founders of the church; and hence their names are written in the twelve foundation-stones of the new Jerusalem. They live in their inspired writings; but, in other respects, their office was clearly designed to be temporary. It is evident, from the cases of Matthias and Paul, that an apostle must have been an eye-witness of the risen Jesus. Peter intimates that the vacancy in the apostolical college, occasioned by the fall of Judas, is to be supplied by one "ordained to be a witness, with" the faithful eleven, "of His resurrection." And Paul demands of the Corinthians, "Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?" It is in consistency with these suggestions that we read of no appointment of successors when the apostles died; the work of the apostolate being finished. "PROPHETS" and "EVANGELISTS" are commonly allowed to have been extraordinary officers of the church; limited to its primitive age, and distinguishable from its successive functionaries. It was, probably, in immediate connection with the ministry of the apostles, that they discharged their eminent duties.

The word "BISHOP" signifies *overseer*, or *superintendent*: "PRESBYTER," *elder*: "DEACON," *minister, servant or attendant*. "PRIEST" has been traced, by some, to PRESBYTER. But this etymology is doubtful; and, as it is the office of priesthood to offer sacrifice for sin, the name is metaphorically, but very improperly, and never

in the Scriptures, given to the Christian minister. "CLERGY" is a term that signifies *lot*, or *inheritance*. Its use, in ecclesiastical language, is intended to convey the idea that ministers are God's "lot" in the church; but the title was anciently given to all the people of God, according to the text of Moses—"The Lord's portion is his people: Jacob is the lot of his inheritance"—rendered by the LXX., *σχόλινισμα κληρονομίας αὐτοῦ*. Deut. xxxii. 9.

The accurate definition of terms is a needful preliminary to wisely conducted discussion. It dissipates the awe which is often unseasonably inspired by the use of doubtful phraseology, and by the misapplication of that which is authorized. In passing, we may briefly give two examples:—It is not in Holy Scripture, though in "the testimony of writers in the later English Church," that mention is made of those who are "associated in the priesthood of Christ," and whose "hands convey the sacrifice."\* Again, we find the surprising statement, that "the bishops are apostles to us, from their *witnessing* Christ, and *suffering* for him."† In reply, it is not necessary to demand evidence of the latter clause; though it is by no means convincing. How the prelates "suffer for Christ," in any appropriate sense, the Tractarian does not condescend to say: but he is not the only advocate of the opinion; since another writer of the same school summons his fellow presbyters to "support" the bishops "in the brunt of the" present "battle," and adds, with a sympathy that appears romantic—"Black event as it would be for the country, yet (as far as they—the bishops—are concerned) we could not wish them a more blessed termination of their course, than the spoiling of their goods, and martyrdom."‡ It is not necessary, we repeat, to examine these pathetic allusions; or to compare them with recent examples of practical disrespect to ecclesiastical superiors; or even to urge that this account of "witnessing Christ and suffering for him" includes, in the honoured rank of apostles, the humblest

---

\* Bishop Wilson, cited Oxford Tracts, No. 74.

† Oxford Tracts, No. 10.

‡ Oxford Tracts, No. 1.



minister, the female martyr, and the child in the mission-school who suffers persecution for the name of Christ. Our first definition enables us to deny that "the bishops are apostles to us."

We, of course, are not objecting to episcopacy, as a form of church government. Guarded, and checked, and brought back to its early simplicity and efficiency, it is an admirable arrangement for sacred discipline: we have accordingly, adopted it; and it cannot be questioned that in some communities which abjure the name, the real substance of episcopacy exists. And further, in pleading for a ministerial succession, the Methodists will not yield to their zealous censors. Their view is, indeed, supported by the usages of other churches that do not acknowledge prelacy, as well as by the uniform practice of their own community. Ministers officially confer the ministry on candidates. It is their responsibility to testify, by ordination, their belief that the candidate is "moved by the Holy Ghost" to take upon him the solemn office. The orthodox communities require evidence of suitable qualifications; and he who is persuaded of a divine call must receive also, in all common cases, an official appointment from the ordaining body in the church. This is our "notion of a propagated commission;" and it is, certainly, "as simple and intelligible in itself as can well be."\*

To offer the reasons of our own belief is comparatively easy; but it is a more arduous effort to prove that another's theory is false. Every one who knows the laws of reasoning will perceive the disadvantage of our position. But no disadvantage, no irregularity of technical logic, shall make us hesitate in combating the pretension, THAT THE RIGHT OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY BELONGS EXCLUSIVELY TO THE PRELITICAL CLERGY, BECAUSE THEY HAVE DESCENDED IN UNBROKEN SUCCESSION FROM THE APOSTLES OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. Attention is now invited to the difficulties which encumber this theory. The inquirer will perhaps find in the following presump-

---

\* Oxford Tracts, No. 4.

tions, as well as in various facts of church history, and in the closing miscellaneous objections, reason to dispute a claim which is asserted with a boldness that scarcely knows a parallel, and published with a zeal that is worthy of a nobler enterprise.

Considerations that are merely presumptive we are not disposed to magnify by undue regard; but the following appear to merit distinct and satisfactory replies from our opponents.

I. The New Testament contains no intimation of the doctrine in dispute. Its reader is not once instructed to demand that his ministers shall trace an uninterrupted "succession" through the Christian centuries; nor is he once warned against men who cannot verify the long genealogy. And yet, if the doctrine is true, it is tremendously important; and what reverent student of Holy Scripture can explain the omission of monitory allusion? Often have we been constrained to adore the grace and wisdom of the prescient Spirit, under whose guidance evangelists and apostles penned such warnings as meet every case of doubt or peril in the church's eventful history; and we still prefer the old Protestant article of "Holy Scripture sufficient," to the modern refinement of faint revelation "in order to try us whether we love our Lord and Saviour." But the truth is, that, on the *general* subject, the New Testament is not silent. The incarnate Son of God cries, "Beware of false prophets"—and fixes the criterion for their detection: but it is not, Ye shall ascertain their college—or their appointment by a bishop—or their "succession." These directions may be sanctioniously given in our day; but they proceeded not from the lips of Him "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Of such intruders, Christ says, with a divine simplicity that rebukes modern subtilities, "By their fruits ye shall know them."

The evidence of a "ministerial commission" is ample, but inapplicable to the claim which we are withstanding. And it requires much hardihood to assert that all non-prelatical churches are involved in the condemnation of

those whom St. Paul prophetically describes as unwilling to "endure sound doctrine," and therefore "heaping to themselves teachers." The awful history of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, is one of the commonplaces of the controversy; but it appears to have been altogether forgotten that these were *clerical* offenders—that they belonged to an order which, we are told, it is presumptuous on our part to affect. The most cautious of our opponents, indeed, really appeal to Scripture. They magnify doctrines which, according to their own acknowledgment, scarcely escape omission in the sacred pages. We humbly trust that we are willing "to be guided by our Lord's eye," and to honour "the *indications* of His pleasure." But these authors are aware that their more specious pleas are not drawn from the Bible; and they significantly appeal to "docile and affectionate minds," on which it is presumed that evidence which the judgment refuses "must have its weight."\* They concede that, "on this point," (the ministerial commission, as they hold it,) "the New Testament does nowhere furnish a regular and orderly course of instruction, such as, on many great subjects, we find in our Creeds, Articles, and Catechisms. But," they allege, "the mind and will of our divine Master may be gathered plainly enough, at least by those who are willing to show a reasonable respect to the witness of the early church."† Instead of silencing the objector by due references "to the law and the testimony," they ask him "to explain why" they "may not do what" their "fathers in the church have done before" them?‡ He may well reply, that this is but to remove the real question a single step; and while these "theorists" prudently decline "to cite distinct and palpable enactments," he cannot be terrified by the mere assertion—though of unexampled boldness—that, by separating himself from the Church of England, he separates himself "not only from a decent, orderly, useful society, but from THE ONLY

---

\* Oxford Tracts, No. 4.

† Oxford Tracts, No. 52.

‡ Oxford Tracts, No. 47.

CHURCH IN THIS REALM WHICH HAS A RIGHT TO BE QUITE SURE THAT SHE HAS THE LORD'S BODY TO GIVE TO HIS PEOPLE."\* "The only church," forsooth! what becomes of "our sister Church of Rome?" With similar bold effrontery she monopolizes, not only in Great Britain and the United States, but in all the world besides, the tremendous prerogatives of the Christian priesthood! The true Protestant feels that the very silence of Holy Scripture conveys an impressive suggestion; while, on the other hand, he ponders the principle involved in an apostolical caution against giving heed "to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith."

II. It does not appear that the necessary registers have been kept, and handed down with the stamp of authenticity, by the early churches. But this care was surely due to so great an interest as the notion of the Oxford writers supposes. No formal chronicles on the subject are offered; and we are quite sure that if they existed, they would be quickly recovered, by learned industry, from the deepest recesses of beloved "antiquity." If *regular documentary* evidence be still wanting, it is not violent or unreasonable to require its substitute. But what can be accepted in its stead? Are we not warranted—yea, bound—to expect some attestation of extraordinary and altogether decisive character?

III. The "succession" is said to be derived from St. Peter. But we ask the reasons why he, of all the twelve, is thus exclusively honoured; and why, on this assumption, there may not exist twelve "apostolical successions?" It is often said that Peter was appointed the first bishop of Rome; but it is not proved that he was either the founder or the bishop of the Roman Church; as there is no mention of such relation, either in his own general Epistles, or in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. And the question which relates to the immediate successor of the apostles in that city, is involved in much uncertainty.

---

\* Oxford Tracts, No. 4, (*Ad populum.*)

But, leaving these details, we return to the general inquiry, and ask the argument of St. Peter's pre-eminence. There is a remarkable passage, which is occasionally cited by the less thoughtful of the Puseyite fanatics: "And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." On this text it is our satisfaction to quote from the *Oriel Divines*; and thus, by the use of their inverted weapons, to subdue some of their less-instructed disciples. The point is "the power of the keys," "the power of binding and loosing;" and this, according to Mede, "is, as it were, a power of oracle, to declare unto the people the remission of their sins, by the acceptance of Christ's sacrifice." "Of the promise made of the power of the keys," Bishop Andrews finds "the accomplishment" in another scripture: "Then said Jesus to them again," (to his assembled disciples,) "Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." In favour of his view, the bishop asserts "the joint consent of the fathers." Passing by other writers whose testimonies, original or selected, appear in the series,\* we add only the words of Archbishop Laud: "Christ promised the keys to St. Peter. (Matt. xvi.) True; but so did He to all the rest of the apostles, (Matt. xviii., John xx.,) and to their successors, as much as to his. St. Augustine is plain: 'If this were said only of St. Peter, then the church hath no power to do

---

\* See especially Oxford Tracts, No. 35.

it,' which God forbid ! The keys therefore were given to St. Peter and the rest, in a figure of the church, to whose power and for whose use they were given. But there's not one key in all that bunch that can let in St. Peter's successor to a 'more powerful principality' universal than the successors of the other apostles had."

Such witnesses will surely be regarded ; and those of our censors who are least wary and most violent, and who unhesitatingly assert their own descent from Peter, must show cause why none of us may humbly claim kindred, though remote, with James, or John, or Paul. In spirit, in labour, in success, let us seek to follow these ever-honoured men ; while we cannot aspire to be, in any other respect, their successors.

IV. There is no public effort to establish the theory by fair and intelligible argument. On the authority of the Oxford Tracts, it has been urged with entertaining reiteration, that "the *fact* of the apostolical succession" is "too notorious to require proof."\* This is a very convenient assertion for a writer who evidently disdains to be "involved in an argument:" and we cannot say whether his triumphant plea was in the thoughts of a later Tractarian, when the kindred statement was penned—"I shall not prove this at length, for it has been done by others ; and, indeed, the common sense and understanding of men, if left to themselves, would be quite sufficient in this case."† These authors are mindful of the hint which is given by their leader, that the object is "not to prove, but to remind and impress."‡ Their style of maintaining the claim of "apostolical descent" is indeed singular. "We have been born," they write, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."§ But this is an inexcusable perversion of a text which the beautiful connection shows to belong to all who receive Christ, and who share the "power," or privilege, "to become the sons of God ;" even to all "that believed on His name." John i. 12, 13. Of "the dissenting teachers,"

\* Oxford Tracts, No. 7.

† Oxford Tracts, No. 1.

‡ Oxford Tracts, No. 15.

§ Oxford Tracts, No. 1.

it is oracularly pronounced that they "have not" the ministerial commission : of the Romish clergy, that "they are mere intruders in this country : " of the Moravians, that "they lay claim also to an apostolic or episcopal ministry, though it is believed that they are unable to substantiate the succession."\* Consistently do the authors of these summary notices decry "the cold spirit demanding rigid demonstration," and repel inquirers as "hard-headed and subtle reasoners," and "proud-hearted intellectualists." They know the weakness of their own cause ; and if, in any stratagem of disputation, they venture to refer to the existence of proofs, it is sufficient to beg that they may be adduced. If these are taught at college, let them at length escape the academic halls. Surely they are not like popish miracles, which are wrought only in the presence of the faithful.

More than fifty years ago a venerable presbyter of the Church of England declared—"The uninterrupted succession I know to be a fable, which no man ever did or could prove."† This is a bold statement ; but, for its ample justification, let the careful inquirer refer to the Oxford Tracts. What does he find in the "CATENA PATRUM," "the testimony of writers in the later English Church to the doctrine of the apostolical succession?"‡ With unfeigned respect for many of these illustrious names, we must reply that, on the one point in dispute, they offer no valid argument ; and even *their* "testimony," unsustained by Scripture or other conclusive evidence, cannot settle the momentous question. If Bishop Bilson finds the authority of the apostles still "living in their succession," we acknowledge it rather as "living" in their writings. We have never maintained that the ministry is derived from any but the Head of the church ; and we are, therefore, unscathed by the appeals of Hooker, though vivid and powerful as lightning. Nor are we silenced by the assertions of Bishop Andrews, respecting the "grace" which the ordaining church is said to give :

---

\* Oxford Tracts, Nos. 35 and 36.

† John Wesley.

‡ Oxford Tracts, No. 74.

especially as we believe, with him, that "the saving grace the church cannot give," and that "none is either the holier or the learner by his ordination." Bishop Heber attempts to place prelacy on a footing with "the observance of the Lord's day, and our participation in the Lord's supper:" but will any one contend that for these there is no "explicit direction," of divine authority, as the bishop concedes that there is none "for the form of our church-government, and the manner of appointing our spiritual guides?" In fine, the "writers in the later English Church," exhibited in this celebrated "CATENA," fail to convince us either that the excellencies and usefulness of the bishops depend on their prelacy, or that episcopal ordination is identical with the divine call. The Puseyites tell us that no man has a right to minister who is not called of God: we admit the solemn truth, and commend it to their deep consideration and to our own. They add, that *we* are not ordained by successional prelates: we assent; but wait to hear how these premises are connected, before we can allow the conclusion, which has been a thousand times proclaimed, as if the regularity of the whole argument were unquestionable.

Various FACTS OF CHURCH HISTORY appear singularly adverse to the theory of "uninterrupted succession." We know not that Britain was ever visited by an apostle; but we are informed that, at the close of the sixth century—when the British Christians had taken refuge in the mountains of Wales—a Romish missionary came to proselyte the Saxons—the invading tenants of the country. Thus we are entangled in an alliance with the seven hills. The weight of this consideration is felt by some who, nevertheless, cherish the "succession;" and these parties, anxious to be free from Romish contamination, suppose various branches of the sacred appointment. But this is only supposition. Under the circumstances, we fear that we must allow the course of the stream through Rome.

And can it be denied that the stream, flowing in such a channel, has been as turbid as sin and Satan could make it? These pages shall not be disfigured by records which



we would rather consign to perpetual forgetfulness. It is sufficient to say, that the history of fallen man has furnished no passages more painful, more humbling, than those which occur in the lives of the popes and bishops with whom our contemporaries are claiming kindred. We will not quote, even from Popish historians; though many extracts, which might be here introduced, would serve the useful purpose of establishing the total degeneracy of human nature. Of this affecting doctrine the frightful evidence may be drawn from the book of the church, and the biography of men who have, in "succession" or in malignant rivalry, arrogated the title of Christ's Vicars.

But, when it is pleaded that the Holy Spirit was given to such men, not for personal sanctification, but for the efficiency of their public offices—we ask, How then have they not been preserved, in all instances, from heresy? and how is Rome to be even now condemned?

The dilemma of rival bishops offers no small difficulty. How shall we be certified that the true successor of the apostles has always obtained the mitre? It may be said that a council is authorized to decide among the contending parties; but our learned opponents will not deny that a pontiff has been deposed by a council, and yet historically retained in the line. And where was the "uninterrupted succession" when a council deposed both or all the rivals? Where, during the period of eighty years, in which, according to Bellarmine, the church, for want of a lawful pope, had no other head than what is in heaven?

Ancient heretical bishops, returning to the Catholic or orthodox communion, were permitted to retain their rank without re-consecration; and recanting clergy, who had been ordained by heretical bishops, were also received.

Again. Every one who has read the history of the Middle Ages, knows the arts that were often successfully practised for the obtaining of the pontificate. Some of the popes were appointed by reputed heretics and schismatics. And, though the ancient ecclesiastical canons require three bishops to be engaged in the consecration of an archbishop, the successors of St. Peter have been

elected sometimes by the people, sometimes by the clergy, sometimes by the emperors, and sometimes by the cardinals alone. Alas for the modern claim, the vindication of which requires proof of regular and uniform induction in all these cases !

Again. The ancient canons allow that a bishop's ordination may be annulled ; some of the occasions being simony, heresy, and immorality. He who derives his comfort from the notion of unbroken "succession," must therefore confute the testimonies of those historians, up to this moment deemed authentic, who say that in some ages simony and other evils were universally practised. He has the equally arduous task of dismissing the reasonable apprehension, that schismatical bishops have more than once continued the boasted line.

These difficulties are not now suggested for the first time ; nor are they magnified to serve an immediate purpose. Their weight has been felt by candid men of various parties. In favour of our own views, it would not be difficult to show a "CATENA PATRUM," not less reverend than any of those given in the Oxford Tracts. But in our CHAIN would be found the Reformers,\* of blessed memory ; for we have not yet learned to abhor and anathematize the name of PROTESTANT. These enlightened and holy men were not careful to show that, just until their time, Romish orders were valid. They never vindicated their secession by trifling subtleties. They summoned Rome to the bar of truth and reason ; unvailed her enormous guilt ; and gave an irrevocable verdict against "the woman drunken with the blood of the saints," "the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth." We fearlessly affirm their judgment ; and thus disclaim all sympathy with some moderns, who feed in the pastures of Protestantism, and yet unblushingly defend the Church of Rome as a true church. A cherished theory allies them to the depraved communion which denies the Scriptures to her laity—which prescribes for her clergy the blasphemy of forgiving sins—which is ever ready to shed rivers of innocent blood ; and they, who

refuse the right hand of fellowship to the various Protestant churches, recoil not at the thought of such an alliance. But, with solemn deliberation, and in the fear of God, we record our resolution never to admit the relation to Rome; never to honour her as "our beloved sister in captivity," or as "the mother of our new birth;" and never to ascribe the validity of the modern ministry to the ordination bestowed by her pontiffs and bishops on our Protestant fathers.

The doctrines of "uninterrupted succession" and exclusive orders, now revived with the most imposing show of earnestness, are essentially popish. In this light they were undoubtedly regarded by the earlier Protestants. An Elizabethan statute\* admitted the validity of the ordinations of Scotch and other Reformed churches, and allowed their divines to officiate in the Church of England. Dark, in the estimation of the Puseyites, was the day on which such an admission was made: but we believe with joy that, in the present critical times, the English Church and its American offshoot includes many thousands who are baptized with the same spirit of charity and liberality that was displayed in the dawn of the Reformation. Among the living clergy there is a remarkable division of opinion on the "succession." The men ordained by the same bishop, instructed at the same college, and invested with the same powers, are here utterly disunited. But how are the recusants treated by the Oxford writers? What effort is made to enlighten those who are so strangely unacquainted with their own prerogative? Let the Presbyter who leads on the "Anglo-Catholics" reply. After asserting APOSTOLICAL DESCENT according to the view of his school, he says to his fellow-presbyters—"Now every one of us believes this. I know that some will at first deny they do: still they do believe it. Only, it is not sufficiently practically impressed on their minds. They *do* believe it; for it is the doctrine of the ordination service, which they have recognised as truth in the

---

\* 18th Elizabeth, c. vii.

most solemn season of their lives.”\* Still greater boldness is apparent in the selection of a motto, prefixed to the “CATENA :”† “The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned among themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will then say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet.” Let the inquiry thus insinuated be plainly offered: The doctrine of apostolical succession, “whence is it? from heaven, or of men?” And the answer will be instantly returned, not only by proscribed seceders from “the church,” but also by a host of her best clergy, and of her most learned dignitaries—“OF MEN.” The inquirer will soon have ample proof that, in whatever estimation the holy Baptist was held, it is by no means true that “all hold” the Puseyites “as prophets.” These gentlemen seem, indeed, to assume more than prophetic discernment; for they profess to know the creed of their fellow-presbyters better than those presbyters themselves. But let Christendom decide what parties are to be credited: hundreds of evangelical clergymen, who deny the Oxford tenet, and find nothing like it in their ordination service—who bear steady testimony against its revival, and tremble lest its misguided advocates should surrender the very citadel of truth; or a few mystics and academical dreamers, who, in order to give currency to their apocryphal divinity, find it convenient to allege that the dissent of their clerical brethren is, in truth, to be regarded as acquiescence? Episcopal ministers who resist this attempt to storm their very faith and conscience, will have the suffrages, the sympathies, the esteem, of all who think and feel aright. They do not despise antiquity; but their allegiance is reserved for inspiration. They are willing to venerate many of the fathers who flourished in the early Christian centuries; but to place none of them in the rank of the holy apostles and prophets. Wisely do they prefer Scripture to tradition, the spirit to the letter, the grace to the sign, the

---

\*Oxford Tracts, No. 1.

† Oxford Tracts, No. 74.

substance to the shadow : "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."

Once more. The Puseyites reject, as utterly delusive, "the notion that present palpable usefulness, produceable results, acceptableness to" the "flock," "that these and such like are the tests of" a minister's "divine commission."\* We protest against the implication of the passage just cited; and assert the value of "present palpable usefulness," of "produceable results," and even of "acceptableness to" a spiritual "flock," as among the tokens of the divine sanction and blessing, condescendingly vouchsafed to thousands who are not included in the boasted "succession." The truth is told in a few words: Puseyites wish to limit the Holy Spirit, but He proves Himself illimitable.

Who are those successional divines? By what fruits may they be known? Is it even pretended that souls are awakened and saved by their ministry? Are their followers distinguished by a cheerful and sanctifying piety? Is their deportment to all around them, to the ministers and members of other churches, graced by "lovely tempers?"

Let us speak freely in reference to the other side of the question. Who are excluded from the "succession?" Are not multitudes of the most zealous, the most enlightened, the most successful, among the ministers of the age? And does not "the Lord the Spirit" confirm their "word with signs following?" Are they not honoured with "epistles of commendation," to be "known and read of all men?" Of hundreds among them it may be further said, that unto them "it is given, in the behalf of Christ," and in obedience to His call, "to suffer for His sake." The story of their toils and sorrows furnishes the everlasting rebuke to their accusers. Constrained by the deepest convictions of a call from heaven, they have

---

\* Oxford Tracts, No. 1.

regularly accepted an office which they feel to be almost overwhelming; and they are humbly, but successfully, discharging its duties. While the Oxford Tract writers are enjoying the quiet of college shades, these true successors of apostles are "in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by" their own "countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren: in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." Of themselves, indeed, they "will not glory:" every thing they can do and suffer is too mean an offering for their blessed Master. But in His hands they place their cause. Wearied by unjust aspersions, they fly to His tribunal; and, until the supreme day, which they expect with humble joy, they "glory in" their "infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon" them. Yea, they "take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when" they are "weak, then" are they "strong."

Among the MISCELLANEOUS OBJECTIONS to the prelatial tenet, we may place the following.

I. Its utter worthlessness, when viewed in respect to practical and spiritual results. We ask in vain for the *evidence*—we are strongly inclined to deny the *possibility*—of its usefulness in a single instance. And yet it is frequently substituted for the matchless theme of "Christ crucified." To this valueless theory we are unwilling to offer the slightest homage; and therefore we scorn the attempt to show that we are in the "uninterrupted succession;" though it requires little ingenuity to produce a pleading as specious as theirs. The powerless thunders of their wrath will never affright the intelligent Christian: the fascinations of their mysterious theology will never charm him. He will persist in asking the proofs of practical utility, before he accepts their system. And while they consign men who are patriarchs in age, and apostles in zeal, to the abyss that swallowed up the host

of Korah—he will counsel these young gentlemen to read consecutively the sacred history; that they may at length catch some portion of the spirit of gentle Moses, who, when one was eager to check the alleged boldness and irregularity of Eldad and Medad, replied, “Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord’s people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them!”

II. The temper of arrogance which it is calculated to inspire, and to which incidental reference has been made, is another objection to the modern claim. Among those evidences of religious truth which are styled collateral, we have been rightly taught to number its subduing and hallowing influence. The temper of arrogance is truly *uncatholic*, and immeasurably remote from the charity of the gospel. But it can scarcely fail to result from the High Church notions of the clergy’s mystical grandeur and exclusive powers. They who regard the apostolical “authority” as “perpetuated” in the church, and “the jurisdiction” as “conveyed to bishops and priests,” have quoted, in reference to their favourite topic, the words of Bishop Collier:\* “I can’t help saying, that, in my opinion, a prince makes but a lean figure in comparison with an apostle. What is the magnificence of palaces, the richness of furniture, the quality of attendance, what is all this to the pomp of miracles and the grandeur of supernatural power? A prince can bestow marks of distinction, and posts of honour and authority; but he can’t give the Holy Ghost, he can’t register his favourites among the quality of heaven, nor entitle them to the bliss of eternity. No: these powers were apostolic privileges, and the enclosure of the church.” How many of our contemporaries are captivated by the idea of sharing such grandeur and power, it is not our province to decide: but their ecclesiastical exclusiveness shall be rebuked by another bishop, quoted with approbation by Archbishop Bramhall, and thus, singularly enough, found in the “CATENA:”†

---

\* Oxford Tracts, No. 74.

† Oxford Tracts, No. 74.

"Nevertheless, if our form (of episcopacy) be of divine right, it doth not follow from thence, that there is not salvation without it, or that a church cannot consist without it. He is blind who does not see churches consisting without it: he is hard-hearted who denieth them salvation." Where now, we ask, is the "charity" which is "the end of the commandment," "out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned?" Surely it dwells not with those who, for a theory of no practical value, unchurch Lutherans and Presbyterians, Baptists, Congregationalists, and Methodists. The kindred of such bigots is with Rome: for Rome advances only another step, by declaring that the Archbishop of Canterbury is a mere layman. But in vain do they talk of "apostolical descent:" the sainted spirits of John and Paul would not acknowledge them; and their own Peter would say, "Be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

A more serious question arises, which may be suggested in passing. Does not this theory, which excommunicates millions of the servants, likewise reflect on the wisdom and tolerance of the great Master? The New Testament gives the principles, and not the minor details, of church government. And surely this is an indication of divine wisdom and goodness. Christ is the King of the church; and his legislation affords ample proof of his prescient and merciful regard to the varied circumstances of his disciples. Why should any, professing to follow such a Master, insist on the exact uniformity of the churches in every point? Why not cease to dispute about the scaffolding, and unanimously build the temple of the Lord?

III. The successional dogma assumes much that has never been proved; and, indeed, rests on the assumption. An example occurs in the notion of **THE THREE ORDERS**, implying the prelacy of bishops. Those who are resolved, without regard to **THE BOOK**, to believe that the apostles had successors, will not be very scrupulous in exacting scriptural proof that the primitive bishops were, **IN ORDER**,



superior to the presbyters. But to more candid men the following compendious statements are submitted.

We have already regarded "apostles," "prophets," and "evangelists," as the extraordinary officers of the primitive church. Of its other functionaries, some titles appear to all parties to be indiscriminately used in the New Testament; *e. g.*, those of "teacher" and "minister." The sacred authors also speak of "bishops," "presbyters," and "deacons." Our controversy does not immediately respect deacons. *Ἐπίσκοπος*, bishop, is a name indicative of the duty to be discharged, the supervision of the flock. *Πρεσβύτερος* (literally, ELDER) is a title of age, or of respect. It was given by the Jews, and other ancients, to members of public councils; as a similar custom obtains with us, in favour of those who discharge the higher municipal offices, and who are called "aldermen," or "elder men." The transition from the idea of age to that of influence, wisdom, experience, or eminent office, is obviously easy.

We hold that the two titles, bishop and presbyter, are, in sacred phrase, interchangeable. In Acts xx. 17-28, "the elders of the church" are addressed as those whom the Holy Ghost has made "overseers" (literally, bishops) of the flock of Christ. In Tit. i. 5-7, "bishop" and "elder" must be identical, if the apostle's writing is consequential. In 1 Pet. v. 1, 2, Peter calls himself the FELLOW-ELDER (*συμπρεσβύτερος*) of the elders; and charges them to "feed the flock of God, taking the oversight thereof," (*ἐπισκοποῦντες*), "episcopating," as John Milton renders the word; or, discharging the office of bishops. It is replied that, in the Old Testament, the high-priest is occasionally called the priest, and that a similar substitution of title may occur in the New. But where is an ordinary priest called the high-priest? Such an instance would exactly serve our opponent's purpose; for, in the citations just given, the presbyters are honoured with the title which he considers distinctive of the higher order. Every high-priest is a priest; but every priest is not a high-priest. The reference to Scripture so

signally fails, that many of our high Episcopalians descend to the inconclusive plea, that, after the death of the apostles, the title "bishop," which had been first used indifferently with "elder," was exclusively appropriated to the highest class—a distinct order—of church-officers.

The scope of the adverse opinion is, that none but bishops can lawfully ordain to the ministry. But its defenders have not yet explained these inconvenient facts: Instances are recorded in which presbyters have ordained bishops.\* The Church of England cedes much in our favour, by associating priests with a bishop in the imposition of hands on the candidate for priest's orders.† The English Reformers inclined to our main opinion.‡ In the office for the ordination of presbyters, under Edward VI., the text above quoted occurs: "Take head to yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers:" but, after the theory of distinct orders prevailed, this unmanageable text was omitted.

On the whole, we think it apparent, that bishops, presbyters, and pastors, were originally the same. Hence affectionate salutation is sent to a church, with its "bishops and deacons," (Phil. i. 1,) no mention being made of its presbyters or pastors—a thing very strange, if they were not the same with the bishops. And further, when the distinction was first made, the bishops were regarded as eminent in station, but not prelatical in order—*primi inter pares*—the presidents of clerical councils; the chairmen of presbyteries. If these remarks are just, the very basis on which rests the modern claim of "apostolical succession" is swept away.

IV. The same perilous doctrine is made to imply the natural and necessary efficacy of the Christian sacraments. These are to be dispensed by the clergy of a certain line; and then the act of receiving them avails to salvation.

---

\* Stillingfleet's Irenicon, chap. vi. vii.

† Ordination Service.

‡ Erudition of a Christian Man: subscribed by the Archbishops, Bishops, and Clergy, 1537.

It is an affecting coincidence, that the Council of Trent, often quoted as giving just occasion for the unchurching of Rome, strenuously maintains that very dogma of sacramental virtue which the Puseyite zealots hold. We are not, indeed, prepared to depreciate the Christian sacraments. They are "seals," as well as "signs," of the gracious covenant: means of grace, as well as remembrancers; and a special blessing may be well expected to accompany them. But the assertion of their necessary efficacy, when they are administered by a lineal ecclesiastic, is to be rejected with horror. It casts a reflection on the truth, as though *that* were not the means of renewing and emancipating the human spirit. It magnifies a form above living faith. The most blessed ordinance of the church—that which is most eminent IN DEGREE, and which brings the Lamb of God most intimately and most pathetically before our eyes—is no longer prized as a help to savage faith, but is made its substitute. Christianity has lost its ancient character: it is no longer a "reasonable service." And the modern system "fills up the measure of" its doctrinal "iniquity," by enacting the awful part of placing the church, that is, the clergy, between the compassionate Redeemer and the suppliant sinner.

V. The exclusive tenet allows no provision for the spiritual wants of multitudes who are beyond the reach of the clergy whom it accounts regular. Bold and profane is the oft-repeated allusion to "uncovenanted mercies;" and it shall be accordingly dismissed, till its authors find its warrant. But what becomes of the solitary sufferer who is placed out of the reach of Anglican or Romish ministers? of the mariner, who looks up, from the immensity of waters, to the holy hill of God? of myriads, in Christendom, who have never heard the voice of any one in the famous line? Will it be affirmed that a shipwrecked company, cast on some Juan Fernandez, must abstain from all public religious worship, because there is not among them a man of the "succession?"

VI. The countenance given to obscure and unsatisfac-

tory views of Christian privilege and enjoyment, is the final objection to the claim of "uninterrupted succession." The pompous theory removes our anxiety from questions which belong to personal godliness, to those which concern the genealogy and the testimonials of our clergy. May the mercy of our God arrest the delusive and fatal error! Ye disciples of the Puseyite school! hear a remonstrance offered in sorrow and solemnity, but not in that spirit of bitterness and revenge which your demands are too evidently adapted to awaken. You argue, from a mere speculation, that Christ is with you: but do you FEEL His bliss-inspiring presence, and thus enjoy a better proof of a true commission? Is not your view highly perilous to the interests of spiritual religion? Have you not laboured to explain away regeneration? Have you not denied the evidence of grace in the believing soul? Have you not asserted, in defiance of consenting testimonies, which we are ready to bring in myriads, that the supper of the Lord "can afford no comfort to any" who "receive it at" our "hands?"\*

But we pause. WE DARE NOT, WE WILL NOT, RESIGN "THE MINISTRY WHICH" WE "HAVE RECEIVED OF THE LORD JESUS." Calmly, but firmly, we take our stand. We desire the consolations of PEACE; but we cannot betray TRUTH and CONSCIENCE. We wish to cultivate the innocence of the "dove;" but these times call for the wisdom of the "serpent." Above all, we devoutly seek "the wisdom that is from above;" which "is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."

---

\* Oxford Tracts, No. 35.

## TRUTH THE TEST OF SUCCESSION.

Tertullian set aside the claim of heretics to apostolical succession on the ground of their false doctrine, and asserted the apostolicity of those churches that agreed with the apostles, though they had neither apostles nor apostolic men for their founders.

Gregory Nazianzen, speaking of the piety of Athanasius, as resembling that of St. Mark, says, "This succession of piety ought to be esteemed the true succession; for he who maintains the same doctrine of faith is partner in the same chair; but he who defends a contrary doctrine, ought, though in the chair of St. Mark, to be esteemed an adversary to it. This man, indeed, may have a *nominal* succession, but the other has the very thing itself, *the succession indeed and in truth*. Neither is he who usurps the chair to be esteemed in the succession, but he who is pressed into the office—not he who violates all law in his election, but he who is elected in a manner consistent with the laws of the case: not he who holds doctrines opposed to what St. Mark taught, but he who is endued with the same faith as St. Mark. Unless you intend to maintain such a succession as that of sickness succeeding to health, light succeeding to darkness, a storm to a calm, and madness succeeding to soundness of mind!"

Ambrose says, "They have not the inheritance, are not the successors of Peter, who have not Peter's faith."

Melancthon says, "The church is not bound to an ordinary succession, as they call it, of bishops, but to the gospel. When bishops do not teach the *truth*, an ordinary succession avails nothing to the church—they ought of necessity to be forsaken."

Bishop Jewel says, "The grace of God is promised to pious souls, and to those who fear God, and is not affixed to bishops' chairs and succession."

## METHODIST MINISTERS

### TRUE MINISTERS OF CHRIST.

---

“BELOVED,” says an inspired writer, “believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God.” The reason assigned for this divine injunction is, “Because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” In like manner did the Lord himself admonish his disciples to “beware of false prophets.”

Now a command to “try the spirits,” necessarily supposes a test by which they may be tried; and in proportion as the question to be decided is practically important, the analogy of faith will warrant the assumption that the required criterion will be plain and unambiguous. The question is not whether the Bible, as a revelation from God, may or may not be characterized by mystery; but whether an inspired practical rule, of great and vital importance to individual salvation, ought or ought not to be easy of comprehension. In every case in which private judgment is a duty, and error of fatal consequence, the character of God, and the credit of divine revelation, alike require a rule of judgment, plain in itself, and easy of application by all sincere and upright Christians.

Now whether those who fill the sacred office are or are not “true ministers of Christ,” is, upon every sound view of the subject, a vitally important question; and the Scriptures alone furnish the *criteria* by which this question can be decided. The Scriptures are “the word of God;” the unnerring standard of truth; the true touchstone of religious pretension, with regard to faith and practice; and whatsoever will not endure this sovereign

test, is not, and cannot be of God. The Bible, the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants. The abettors of Romish delusion, and of Romish intolerance, say, "Hear the church." We reply, in the language of God, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." We know that God spake these words: "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

What, then, in the case before us, is the scriptural test? We answer briefly, that test is character. Whether the immediate subject of inquiry be the minister, or the ministration, the divinely appointed scriptural test is character.

In proof of this, we refer to 1 John iv. 1-3: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God." Into the precise meaning of particular terms, we need not stay to inquire. Thus much is plain: the test of "the spirits" is to be found in their manifest agreement or disagreement with a certain divine rule, in regard of the doctrines which they preach concerning Christ. The same thing is again explicitly affirmed 2 John 9, 10: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed."

Such, also, is the doctrine of St. Paul: "Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things: hold fast that which is good." (1 Thess. v. 20, 21.) The following passage clearly indicates the true criterion: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." (Gal. i. 8.) We collect from his writings that "the signs

of an apostle," as distinguished from an ordinary minister of Christ, are miracles: "signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds." And that the signs of a true minister of Christ are holiness of life, pureness of doctrine, and laborious, self-denying devotedness to Christ and his service. "*Approving* ourselves as the ministers of God.....by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left," etc. (2 Cor. vi. 4-7.) This is an ordeal to which St. Paul was ever ready to submit his own pretensions. Like his Lord and Master, he was ever ready to say, "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not." And, appealing to those who were his "work in the Lord," he argues, "If I be not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you; for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord." (1 Cor. ix. 2.)

It is observed in one of the Oxford Tracts, that "the simple ground on which St. Paul claimed authority" was "his *office* as a minister and apostle of Christ;" that it was not on account of the gifts or graces which he possessed, or of the labours in which he abounded, but "it was in right of his *office* that he claimed *authority*." (*Tract* No. 24, p. 6.) This we think is substantially correct. And we should maintain that the *authority* of a Christian minister does not depend, properly speaking, upon the character of his talents or the amount of his labours, but upon the fact of his being "the minister of Christ." Let it once be admitted that a man is an apostle or a minister of Christ, and his authority can be no longer questioned.

But the question to be decided is, Who are, and who are not, the ministers of Christ? By what criterion must the churches "try the spirits whether they are of God?" What constitutes "*the seal*," the proof, the unquestionable evidence of their apostleship? To this the writer quoted above replies, "That he *was* an apostle, he (St. Paul) proved by the fact that he had been equally favoured with the twelve; that he had seen our Lord



Jesus Christ in the flesh ; and had received the doctrines of his gospel, and grace to preach them to the world." But let us hear the apostle himself : " Am I not an apostle ? " Here the question is fairly mooted ; and the answer follows. " Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord ? Are not ye my work in the Lord ? If I be not an apostle to others, yet *doubtless* I am to you ; for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord." (1 Cor. ix. 1, 2.) Now it never could be the intention of St. Paul to rest the *proof* of his apostleship upon the fact of his having " seen Jesus Christ." Hundreds of persons saw the Lord, even after his resurrection,—thousands prior to that event,—not one of whom is ever pretended to have been an apostle. That he was an apostle, he *proved* by the decisive fact, that God had wrought effectually by his ministry : " The seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord."

Such, also, is the doctrine of the Lord himself. " Ye shall know them " (false prophets) " by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles ? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit ; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." (Matt. vii. 16-20.) The teacher, truly and divinely authorized, is compared to " a good tree " bringing forth " good fruit ; " that is, " the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." And " every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." This is a rule that is equally applicable to the man and to his ministry ; a rule, as might have been expected, which all may understand. According to this scripture, to expect " good fruit," the fruit of truth and holiness, embodied in the life and doctrine, and resulting from the ministry of " false prophets," is not less palpably absurd than it would be to expect " grapes from thorns, and figs from thistles."

Such is the scriptural test, the law of the case, laid

down by Christ himself: "By their fruits ye shall know them." Beautifully in accordance with this rule are the following apostolic precepts: "Be thou an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you." (1 Tim. iv. 12; Titus ii. 7.) And thus, according to the united testimony of the divine witnesses, a holy and exemplary life, and a ministry, as to doctrine, truly scriptural and evangelical, diligently and faithfully exercised in the name of Christ, and blessed of God to the conversion and salvation of men, are, through all ages, the infallible outward *criteria* of a true minister of Christ.

We have not forgotten that "no man taketh this honour upon himself, but he that is called of God;" a subject to which we shall advert presently. The necessity of a divine call to the Christian ministry we fully admit. But in the case of those who solemnly profess to be "moved by the Holy Ghost" to enter into this sacred office, these constitute the scriptural *criteria*, the visible test by which "the spirits" must be tried "whether they are of God."

#### THE METHODIST MINISTRY PROVED TO BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THIS DIVINE RULE.

On behalf of the Methodist ministry we maintain,

FIRST, that the STANDARD by which its formation has ever been regulated is eminently *pure* and *scriptural*. The following qualifications are regarded as indispensable:—

(1.) PERSONAL HOLINESS. Methodism does not expect to gather "grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles." In every candidate for the ministry, it requires satisfactory evidence of a scriptural conversion to God, made manifest to all by deep and fervent piety. No station in life, however elevated; no learning, however varied and ex-

tensive; no talents, however useful, or however splendid, will here be accepted as a substitute for personal holiness. Not only must the candidate for this ministry profess to be "in Christ Jesus;" he must also give satisfactory proof that he has "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

(2.) SOUNDNESS IN THE FAITH. Methodism is by no means indifferent as to the maintenance of "the faith which was once delivered to the saints." Its doctrinal standard is before the world; and the assent which it requires is full and unreserved. Allowing Christian liberty to Christian men, on matters of mere opinion, our articles of belief clearly embody whatsoever is really vital in the faith of the gospel; and to this we require sincere and unreserved assent. Methodism knows nothing of that casuistry which tries to prove that a man may, "with a good conscience," subscribe to articles of faith which he believes to be erroneous and false.

(3.) A DIVINE CALL. Though he should be a man both of eminent piety, and of superior talents, and though there were no objection to him on the ground of doctrinal belief, a Methodist Conference would not dare to admit into the ministry a candidate who could not conscientiously avow his solemn belief that he was "moved by the Holy Ghost" to take upon him "this office."

(4.) SUITABLE MINISTERIAL ENDOWMENTS. By these are meant, such gifts, natural, spiritual, and acquired, as may reasonably be judged necessary to a proper discharge of those duties which the word of God attaches to the pastoral office. For it is deemed a just and scriptural presumption, that those whom God calls to the pastoral office, he also qualifies for the efficient discharge of its sacred duties.

For the truth and accuracy of these representations, we confidently appeal to every man who has been at the pains to examine and understand the subject. In every particular they are capable of the most satisfactory proof and they are amply sufficient to show that, so far as personal qualification is concerned, the ministerial standard

adopted by the Methodist churches is eminently pure and scriptural. We maintain,

SECONDLY, that the PRACTICAL ADMINISTRATION of Methodism has ever been characterized by an upright, cautious, and impartial adherence to these truly scriptural principles. The very best rules would be of little value, if, through a corrupt or careless administration, they were allowed to remain inoperative. But no man, who is acquainted with the subject, will affirm that this is the case in Methodism. No merely human administration is either perfect or infallible. But we do maintain that our mode of trial and examination is eminently calculated to secure a succession of "faithful men," as well as to detect and exclude from the ministry any man who is not duly qualified to fill that office. It may be truly affirmed that no body of Christian ministers in the world are subjected to a more searching and impartial scrutiny than that to which our ministers are regularly, and without exception, subjected. So that if practical errors do sometimes occur, they are such only as scarcely any amount of human care and vigilance can prevent. We maintain,

THIRDLY, that, by the grace of God, the GENERAL CHARACTER of the Methodist ministry is in accordance with the requirements of Holy Scripture. Not as though we had already attained to that degree of holy, self-denying zeal, and heavenly knowledge, and pure devotedness to God and to his service, to which we know it to be both our duty and our privilege to attain. But this also "we follow after;" ever desirous more perfectly to comprehend "what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we might be filled with all the fulness of God;" and ever anxious more worthily to fulfil "the ministry which we have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." We institute no comparisons, either invidious to others or disparaging to ourselves; but with regard to the ministers of "other churches," we say meekly and respectfully, but without hesitation,

"Are they ministers of Christ? So are we." In the sight of God we would be ever ready to humble ourselves, and to confess that we are very "unprofitable servants;" but we feel perfectly satisfied that, whether the inward moving of the Holy Ghost, or the theological talents, or the ministerial usefulness, or the scriptural recognition and appointment, be considered, Methodist ministers are second to none others.

Upon the whole, Methodism has no just cause to be ashamed of its pastorate. Not a few of its ministers have been learned and eminently gifted men: men who have adorned the Christian pulpit, and rendered no mean service to the cause of biblical and theological learning. At present the literature of the Methodists is extensive and various; and it has justly been pronounced to be, "in some of its departments, extremely rich and valuable." In this respect, we believe the general character of our ministry is decidedly on the advance. We conclude this topic with a remark of one who well understood the subject upon which he writes: "On all questions connected with conversion, and with religious experience and practice, it has ever been, as a whole, an enlightened and impressive ministry; equal, we believe, to that which has been exercised in any section of the universal church since the apostolic times." And we maintain,

FINALLY, that the EFFECTS PRODUCED by our ministry are such as to furnish the most decisive proof that it is essentially a true, and scriptural, and efficient ministry. We defy any man to controvert this fact, except on principles which flatly contradict "the word of God," as well as the common sense of mankind. The rule of God is, "By their fruits ye shall know them." And men do not gather "grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." But by the blessing of God upon this ministry, myriads of men "who were dead in trespasses and sins" have been "quickened together with Christ." Many thousands of these have already filled up the allotted space, and finished their course with joy. Converted from sin to holiness, they

lived to adorn the profession of the gospel with every Christian virtue; and died "to be Christ's, which is far better." Many thousands more are still living, of whom, by God's blessing upon this ministry, it might be said, "Being now made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." These are our epistle, known and read of all men. "The seal of our apostleship are these in the Lord." So that, with abundant cause for humiliation before God, we have also abundant reason to believe that he is pleased to accept and bless our ministerial labours. "And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God: who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life."

Whatever, therefore, may be the case with others, we are entitled to plead "not guilty" to the following allegation of an Oxford writer: "They have been deluded into a notion that present palpable usefulness, produceable results, acceptableness to your flocks, that these and such like are the tests of your divine commission." (*Tract* No. 1, "Addressed to the Clergy," p. 4.)

When we consider the solemn declaration of Christ to his apostles, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world: I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain:"—when we consider also *the end* for which the gospel ministry was instituted; and that God hath said, "As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it:"—putting these together, we cannot but feel assured that no minister truly invested with a "divine commission" will ever labour

altogether in vain. Nor can we look upon "produceable results" as matter of small importance in estimating the character of a Christian ministry.

We grant, however, that to determine to what extent a minister of Christ is really useful is far from being so easy a matter as some seem to imagine. The departments of spiritual usefulness are various and widely different; nor does it always happen that the *apparent* is the *real* result. To argue, therefore, from the mere absence of "present palpable usefulness" to the *invalidity* of the ministry, may be wrong. But since *the Spirit* only "giveth life," whenever such effects as those above enumerated are undeniably produced, it cannot be wrong to appeal to "present palpable usefulness" as a divine and living confirmation of the Christian ministry. This is perfectly reasonable: it is consistent with the rule of Christ; and, as we have proved already, it is the course adopted by St. Paul himself.

#### HIGH CHURCH PRETENSIONS TRIED AND CONFUTED.

The necessity of a solemn appointment to the ministerial office has been recognised in all ages from the foundation of the Christian church; and it is fully recognised by the Methodists. Whoever among us believes himself to be "moved by the Holy Ghost," to take part in this ministry, is "first tried," according to the Scripture canon; and, if approved, is then solemnly set apart to the sacred office, by "the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." The Rev. John Wesley was a presbyter of the Church of England; and the Methodist ministers are allowed to possess what has been called "a genuine presbyterian ordination." It is allowed also, that if the clergy of the Church of Scotland, and of the Reformed Churches of Europe, are "the ministers of Christ," then "so are we." Now that presbyterian ordination is valid and scriptural is the recorded judgment of the illustrious authors of the glorious Reformation from Popery, including the most eminent divines, bishops, and archbishops of the English Episcopal Church.

A contrary opinion has, however, of late, been strenuously maintained, particularly by those who are commonly denominated Puseyites. In certain "Tracts for the Times," these writers maintain that "Presbyterian ministers have assumed a power which was never intrusted to them; and have presumed to exercise the power of ordination, and to perpetuate a succession of ministers, without having received a commission to do so." (*Tract No. 7, p. 2.*)

They say that there are, by unalterable divine appointment, three distinct orders of ministers in the church of Christ, namely, bishops, priests, and deacons; that bishops only have authority to ordain; and that where there is no bishop, there can be no valid ordination, no true ministers, or church, or sacraments. Hence these writers affirm also a regular and unbroken series of valid episcopal ordinations, commencing with the apostles, and reaching down to the present times; and maintain that all those, and none but those, who have been ordained by a bishop in this unbroken line of succession, are true ministers of Christ.

In this scheme, *character*, that is, scriptural truth and holiness, is no test of a true minister of Christ. So far is it from being true, that "by their fruits ye shall know them," the most wicked man, a mere teacher of lies, may be a true minister of Christ; while the holiest and most exemplary of Christian teachers may be "false prophets;" because, according to this hypothesis, the one thing essentially needful to constitute a true minister of Christ is the circumstance of ordination by episcopal hands. To imagine any thing more directly in opposition to the word of God, on this subject, is hardly possible. Proceeding briefly to examine this most visionary and pernicious theory, we remark,—

*First*, That there is in the church of Christ, by divine appointment, the three distinct orders above mentioned, is mere assumption. It never can be proved by Scripture; and it is flatly denied by nearly all the divines of Protestant Christendom.

*Secondly*, That there is any such rule as the above,



binding upon the church in all ages, is an assumption grosser still, and still more entirely destitute of proof. Direct Scripture warrant for this assumption is not even pretended. If, therefore, the Bible is a perfect rule of faith, we are at perfect liberty to reject this conceit.

*Thirdly*, The argument by which it is attempted to deduce the fact of such a succession as the above from holy Scripture, is obviously fallacious. The argument is this: Christ promised to be with his disciples and their successors, "even unto the end of the world;" therefore, either the fact of such a succession must be affirmed, or we "must admit that the church which Christ founded is no longer to be found upon earth, and that the promise of his protection" has already failed. (*Tracts* No. 7, p. 3; No. 5, p. 11.) But the fallacy is so obvious, that a child may easily detect it. As a learned prelate justly remarks, "The fallacy consists in confounding together the unbroken, apostolical succession of a Christian ministry generally, and the same succession, in an unbroken line, of this or that individual minister." The existence of the former is a well-established fact; and it is all that the Scriptures warrant us to expect. The latter is a mere fiction.

*Fourthly*, In their attempts to establish the fact of such a succession as they contend for, by historic proof, they do not merely set aside, but violently outrage and contradict, the rule laid down by Christ; that is, "By their fruits ye shall know them." There is no denying the fact, that either an infidel, a simonist, a drunkard, an adulterer, and even a murderer, must, in some instances, be admitted to be Christ's vicar upon earth, the sole dispenser of the Holy Ghost, and fountain of all rightful authority in the church of Christ, or the chain is broken, and the succession contended for irrecoverably lost; for such unquestionably were not a few of those men who form essential links in the chain of uninterrupted succession. According to the Saviour's rule, men of this odious character are notoriously "*false* prophets." They are sons of Belial, and messengers of Satan; and, as such, they can form no

part of Christ's true succession. But the Tractarian scheme affirms such men to be true ministers of Christ, and the very men by whom the true succession has been preserved, transmitted, and perpetuated. And thus the very man of whom, in the character of a Christian minister, St. John says, "Receive him not;" and St. Paul, "Let him be accursed;" must be acknowledged as the legitimate successor of these holy apostles! According to the Scriptures, no man of notoriously vicious life "hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God:" but according to the Tractarian scheme, some men, the detail of whose vices would exhaust the catalogue of human crimes, have been, in fact, the spiritual descendants of the apostles, inheriting, by virtue of their descent from St. Peter, "the keys of the kingdom of heaven." Whom, then, shall we believe? The God of the holy Scriptures, or the misguided authors of the Oxford Tracts? For any man to believe both, except in a dream, would seem to be a plain impossibility.

It is said that "the apostolic powers," so called, "if not transmitted through these, in some instances *corrupt*, channels, have not been transmitted to our times at all." And since these *corrupt* transmitters cannot possibly be dispensed with, the following vindication is set up. All men are sinners; and "what are, after all, the *petty differences* between sinner and sinner" when viewed in relation to the holy God? (*Tract* No. 5, p. 11.) It must be kept in mind, that, according to the scheme which these men advocate, the most pious Protestant bishop that ever adorned the church, and the most vicious pope that ever disgraced the Papacy, are equally essential links in the chain of unbroken succession; and the question is, in this instance, What, after all, "are the *petty differences* between sinner and sinner?" We answer, in the judgment of God and of the holy Scriptures, these differences are as real, as palpable, and as eternal too, as those which separate light from darkness, truth from falsehood, the minister of Christ from the apostle of Antichrist and the messenger of Satan. They are "the petty differences"

on account of which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will sentence some men to "everlasting punishment," and admit others to "life eternal."

But we must view this subject under a somewhat different aspect, and examine it a little more closely. Puseyites maintain that, in virtue of unbroken succession from the apostles, the Episcopal clergy are "exclusively God's ambassadors;" (*Tract No. 4*, p. 1;) that they are exclusively intrusted with the "word and sacraments, the keys of the kingdom of heaven, yea, the keys of heaven and hell;" and that they are exclusively invested with the awful prerogative "of dispensing Christ's body and blood." (*Tract No. 10*, pp. 5, 6.) Irrespective of the truth or falsehood of the doctrines which they preach: irrespective of the morality or immorality, the purity or wickedness, of their lives: irrespective, in fact, of every thing but the circumstance of their being ordained by a bishop: they, and they only, are true ministers of Christ!

Nor let it be supposed that we here exaggerate. This, as shall be more fully evinced, is but a plain, unvarnished statement of high church pretensions.

For a part of the above statement, we have adduced the authority of the writers themselves; and the following literal quotation will fully support the rest:—"A person not commissioned from the bishop may use the words of baptism, and sprinkle or bathe with the water, *on earth*, but there is no promise from CHRIST that such a man shall admit souls to the *kingdom of heaven*. A person not (so) commissioned may break bread, and pour out wine, and pretend to give the Lord's supper, but it can afford no comfort to any to receive it at his hands, because there is no warrant from CHRIST to lead communicants to suppose that, while he does so here *on earth*, they will be partakers in the SAVIOUR'S *heavenly* body and blood. And as for the person himself, who takes upon himself without warrant to minister in holy things, he is all the while treading in the footsteps of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, whose awful punishment you read of in the book of Numbers." (*Tract No. 35*, p. 3.)

Now it is a well-known fact that perhaps five-sixths of all the Protestant ministers in Christendom are in precisely this condition. Prelatical ordination they have not: they are, therefore, to a man, in the condemnation of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; which "sinners against their own souls went down alive into the pit, and perished from the congregation."

By the same summary process, almost every Protestant church in Europe is ejected from the pale of scriptural Christianity: they have no true ministry, no sacraments, no promise from Christ of his presence in their assemblies, or of his blessing upon their ordinances.

From the same premises it infallibly follows that not one of these men themselves can ever be certain that he is one whit better, in these respects, than Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and that the congregations over which these men preside, can never be certain that they themselves are not blindly led into the pit. The proof by which alone these points can be made rationally certain has never yet been produced. Nor, in the present day, could any thing short of a new direct revelation from heaven make it certain to a reflecting Christian people, that the man who ministers to them is really in the apostolical succession, as affirmed by the Oxford Tractarians. So far, therefore, is the Episcopal church from being "the only church in this realm [England] which has a right to be *quite sure* that she has the Lord's body to give to the people;" (*Tract* No. 4, p. 5;) on Tractarian principles, she has plainly no more right to be "quite sure" on this point, than she has a right to be "quite sure" as to the precise complexion of the inhabitants of the moon. "The ultimate consequence must be," as Archbishop Whately observes, "that any one, who sincerely believe, that his claim to the benefits of the gospel covenant depends on his own minister's claim to the supposed sacramental virtue of true ordination, and *this*, again, on perfect apostolical succession, as above described, must be involved, in proportion as he reads, and inquires, and

reflects, and reasons on the subject, in the most distressing doubt and perplexity."

These are but a few of the consequences necessarily resulting from the doctrine of apostolical succession, as maintained by the Oxford Tractarians. If this doctrine itself were undeniably true, or if the truth of this doctrine were fully established, either by the word of God, or by unquestionable historic proof, we will not affirm that, in such a case, these consequences would warrant us to reject the premises from which they flow; but we do affirm, that before any proposition that is pregnant with such monstrous results can be admitted, the truth of that proposition ought to be most clearly demonstrated; and the proof rest with the men by whom such fearful dogmas are advanced. Has the truth of this doctrine ever been thus demonstrated? Never. Does the most credulous of these writers believe in his conscience that the truth of this doctrine is such as to admit of no reasonable doubt? Not one of them, we believe, would dare to affirm so much. But if so, we boldly affirm that the promulgation of such doctrines cannot be guiltless in the sight of God; nor can it be otherwise than perilous to the souls of men, and hurtful to the religion of Christ. The following observation, from one of the ablest writers of their own church, deserves from these unhappy men a deep and solemn consideration: "The succession of persons is so uncertain, that whosoever shall make either the being of a church, or the ministry, or the power of the sacraments, depend upon it, shall so offend Christ's little ones, and be guilty of such a scandal, as 'it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea.'"

But unfortunately, an unparalleled boldness of assertion, shyness of proof, and a fearful recklessness of consequences, are the characteristics of the High-church writers. It must not be supposed that these men are either ignorant or unaware of the consequences which infallibly attend their favourite doctrine. Well do they know the bearing of this doctrine upon the case of "other churches,"

and other ministers; "but," say they, "we must not shrink from our deliberate views of truth and duty, because difficulties may be raised about the case of such persons.—To us such questions are abstract, not practical." (*Tract* No. 4, p. 6.) To unchristianize nearly all the Protestant churches in the world: to include thousands of pious, learned, and devoted ministers of Christ in the sin and condemnation of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram: to harass the souls of the simple, on subjects of eternal moment, with doubts which can never be resolved; and to induce a universal skepticism with regard to Christian ministrations, and the validity of Christian ordinances, are, with these men, matters of no practical moment! These are "merely abstract questions," which must not for a moment be allowed to disturb their serenity, much less to deter them from the avowal of their principles!

As to proof, they deem it idle and superfluous to speak of such a thing. "As to the *fact* of the apostolical succession, etc., this is too notorious to require proof. Every link of the chain is known, from St. Peter to our present metropolitans." (*Tract* No. 7, p. 2.) To expect rational proof from men who can write, or rather *rant*, at such a pace, would be absurd. However, the matter being so very plain, it cannot be unreasonable to require these gentlemen to exhibit this golden chain, by a simple detail of the several links of which it is composed. Let them produce the chain, and we will pledge ourselves that it shall be examined fairly. Yes, "every link," if needful, we will bring to the infallible touchstone of the word of God: "By their fruits ye shall know them." In the meanwhile *we* absolutely deny *their* bold but incredible assumptions.

So far from deeming this point so plain as to require no proof, not a few of the most learned Episcopal writers frankly admit that the fact of such a succession never was proved, and never can be. Doctors, bishops, and even archbishops, there are, in abundance, who affirm, as strongly as we do, that, upon High-church principles,

"there is not a minister in all Christendom, who is able to trace up, with any approach to certainty, his own spiritual pedigree."

Nor are these writers themselves very consistent in this respect. Plain as the matter is affirmed to be, they sometimes speak of it with ominous caution. Thus: "It is surely worth our while carefully to search the Scriptures with a view to ascertain this point. And while we do this, let us bear constantly in mind that slight intimations of our Lord's will are in their degree as much binding upon us as express commands." (*Tract* No. 24, p. 10.) So that if permission is given to try this question by the word of God, the inquirer is solemnly admonished to expect, not plain, decisive proof, but merely "slight intimations." So with regard to the historic proof. In answer to the fatal allegation that "there is no sufficient historic evidence of a personal succession of valid episcopal ordinations," the learned apologist for this popish theory replies, "If nothing will satisfy men but actual demonstration, I yield at once." An ominous reply, surely, to such an allegation. And yet these writers have the daring to affirm, that "the fact" of such an "apostolical succession is too notorious to require proof;" and that "every link in the chain is known, from St. Peter to our present metropolitans."

But what, after this, shall we say to the following passage? After asking, "Why should we talk so much of an *establishment*, and so little of AN APOSTOLICAL SUCCESSION?" and an admonition to such as "slight this holy succession where it may be had;" the writer proceeds: "I readily allow that this view of our calling has something in it too high and mysterious to be fully understood by unlearned Christians. But the learned, surely, are just as unequal to it. It is part of that ineffable mystery, called in our Creed, the communion of saints; and, with all other Christian mysteries, is above the understanding of all alike, yet practically alike within the reach of all who are willing to embrace it by true faith." (*Tract* No. 4, pp. 5, 6.)

Here all is mystery, ineffable, transcendent mystery. To think of understanding it would be profane. But it is some consolation to "unlearned Christians" to be informed that if they cannot understand this mystery, the most learned are "just as unequal" to the task as themselves. Consolation there truly is, for both parties; for we are told that though, like "all other Christian mysteries," this is "above the understanding of all alike," yet, with them, it is "practically within the reach of all who are willing to embrace it by true faith."

The plain English of the matter is this: The Puseyites oracularly affirm a series of absurd propositions, dogmas which are in plain contradiction to the word of God, and which absolutely defy all human possibility of proof: the world has nothing to do but blindly and implicitly believe them; and thus the mystery which is "above the understanding of all alike," comes "practically within the reach of all who are willing to embrace it by true faith." And let no man forget, that the mild alternative left to him is, the peril of going down quick into the pit, with "Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, whose awful punishment we read of in the book of Numbers." But who is this that thus "exalteth himself" in the sanctuary of God? this that, "as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God?" If it is not "that man of sin, the son of perdition, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy with the brightness of his coming," the resemblance between the two, to say the least, is even fearfully striking.

Such is the system which is nurtured in the Protestant University of Oxford; the system which is warmly defended by not a small party of clergymen in the Protestant Church of England, and its filial representative in the United States: a system at once monstrous in its legitimate results; and, in itself, baseless, irreligious, and indefensible. It is a bold attempt to subject the souls of men, not to the plain dictates of divine revelation, but to a priestly despotism, as unmitigated, as dark, and as degrading as that of Papal Rome.



It is not without cogent reason, that those who advocate this system decry the exercise of private judgment; and affirm that the Holy Scriptures "are not a rule of practice, of conduct, or of discipline;" (*Tract No. 45, p. 4;*) and assert the necessity of believing "on authority, antecedent to proof;" and complain that "a cold spirit has crept into the church, of demanding rigid demonstration for every religious practice and observance." (*Tract No. 8, p. 3.*) But how striking is the contrast between these sentiments and those of the apostles of Christ: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God. Prove all things: hold fast that which is good." That the Oxford Tract system should find either teachers or disciples, in such an age, and in such a place, must be, to every sound-hearted Protestant, matter of astonishment, grief, and indignation.

We conclude with the remark of an old writer; a sentiment which finely accords with the doctrine of Scripture, as well as with the judgment of the most pious and learned of Protestant divines: "The power of saving men's souls depends not upon succession of persons, according to human institutions, but upon the apostolical doctrine, accompanied by the Divine Spirit. If, upon the exercise of their ministerial power, men are converted, find comfort in their doctrine and the sacraments, and at their end deliver up their souls unto God their Redeemer, and that with unspeakable joy: this is a divine confirmation of their ministry, and the same more real and manifest than any personal succession."

## METHODISTS HAVE THE TRUE CHRISTIAN SACRAMENTS.

---

THE word "sacrament" is derived from the Latin *sacramentum*, which is the term used in the Vulgate to express a religious rite or mystery. Primarily it signified a military oath, by which every individual who entered the army was sworn to fidelity; and as the church of Christ on earth is acknowledged to be a "church militant," being placed in a constant state of warfare, the early Christians applied it to those external rites of Christianity which were instituted by our Lord when he was on earth, and by which his disciples openly and before the world express their allegiance to him. The Romanists have applied it to seven ceremonies of religion; some of which they themselves have invented. But those who take the Scripture as their sole authoritative guide restrict the term "sacrament" to those signs and seals of the evangelical covenant which are expressly recognised as such in the sacred book. In consequence, they know of no other sacraments, or, in other words, of no other emblematic institutions which are at the same time enjoined means of grace, than baptism and the Lord's supper. All persons who invest other ceremonies of religion with this sacramental character incur the guilt of adding to the words of God.

The Church of England, the Church of Scotland, the Heidelberg Catechism, and all the leading Protestant Confessions, have joined to represent the sacraments as signs and seals of the covenant of grace. They regard

them as covenant transactions—illustrations by action, and visible confirmations, of a compact entered into by God with his redeemed creatures.

Hence while the Romanist view errs in the extreme of superstition, dishonouring God the Holy Ghost, so it must be concluded that the Zuinglians, and all who make the sacraments to be nothing but bare emblems, err in the extreme of rationalism, and in their defective doctrine dishonour God the Incarnate Son. If circumcision was a sign and seal (as stated in Rom. iv. 11) of the covenant by which God mercifully engaged to justify men through faith, then, as St. Paul declares baptism to be “the circumcision of Christ,” (Col. ii. 10, 12,) or Christian circumcision, as the whole scope and context compel us to understand the phrase, this baptism must have the same office and significancy, whatever added significancy it may have besides.

The passage from Gal. iii. 27–29 may be adduced to the same effect: “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s,” (by thus being baptized and putting on Christ,) “then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs of the promise”—that is, heirs of the promise of which circumcision was the original seal, which original seal is now displaced by Christian circumcision or baptism. And with regard to the other sacrament, if the passover was a sign, pledge, or seal, (Ex. xiii. 9,) and subsequently a memorial, (Ex. xii. 14,) then these characters will belong to the Lord’s supper, the relation of which to the new covenant in his blood is stated by himself in words which further imply its retrospective relation to that passover. St. Paul indeed speaks out fully, and says, “Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.” (1 Cor. v. 7, 8.)

As far as a sacrament contains a *signum significans*, or signifying sign, it is emblematic. Baptism, by its water, represents the poured-out and cleansing influence of the Holy Ghost; and the eucharist, by its elements, the body

and blood of Christ—his body sacramentally exhibited signifying life or sustenance—his blood, atonement. But as far as a sacrament contains a *signum confirmans*, or confirming sign, it is a divine pledge or security that God will give unto the receiver all the grace of the covenant to which it refers, according to his obedience to its proposed terms; and thereby it may be, though always it is not, the channel through which it is conveyed, inasmuch as the traitor Judas partook of the last supper, and Simon Magus, though baptized, was “in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity.”

Sacraments are ordinances of a mixed nature, and hence assume a varied aspect. It is for want of attending to this that so many disputes have arisen respecting them. In one point of view they are tests of our Christian obedience; in another, the instruments of Christian fellowship; in another, bonds of charity; in another, incentives to devotion; in another, safeguards against sin; in another, memorials of Christ's purchased benefits; in another, aids to our feeble faith; in another, badges of discipleship. They are all these; but chiefly they are appointed to be channels by which the Holy Ghost shall convey to every faithful receiver that measure of covenant-grace which his circumstances at the time shall require, and accordingly as he shall comply, in the exercise of penitence and faith, with the evangelical conditions of salvation.

The administration of the sacraments rests with the pastoral ministry, and belongs to the pastoral office.

It was the apostles who received the commission to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, (Mark xvi. 15, 16;) or, as it is expressed in another place, “to make disciples” of them, (*μαθητεύσατε*,) attending at the same time to the other commanded adjuncts of the evangelical ministry, baptizing (*βαπτίζοντες*) and teaching (*διδάσκοντες*;) and therefore all the ministers of Christ, who, by the call of his Holy Spirit, and the appointment of the visible church, succeed to the apostolical responsibilities of establishing and extending the kingdom of Christ, are the true and scriptural baptizers. Being the guar-

dians and dispensers of the truth, they are the best judges of the fitness of candidates for this holy ordinance. St. Paul, it is true, did not usually baptize: Christ sent him rather to preach the gospel. He only baptized in a few instances. Giving himself up to the highest function of the apostolical office, he left his converts to be baptized by others, whom he doubtless appointed. So St. Peter. (Acts x. 48.) But in these instances baptism appears to be administered by apostolic authority and command, and probably by the hands of the fellow-labourers of the apostles; so that it is evident, the responsibility of having baptism administered was considered to lie with those who for the time being were pastors and teachers in the church of God. Again, it is evident that if there is to be an evangelical teaching and training of candidates for the Lord's supper, and if a judgment has to be exercised with regard to the fitness of such candidates for communion, the same pastoral institution is necessary as in baptism. He on whom the responsibility devolves of providing for the stated preaching of the word, and of preparing, through the other ministrations of the gospel, penitent and believing individuals for the obsequiation of the Christian covenant, must himself most appropriately confer the sign. If the ministers of Christ are called to feed the flock of God over which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers, or pastors, well may it be reckoned a pastoral act to administer unto the members of that flock the sacramental emblems of his body and blood. To administer the sacrament, then, is not a priestly act exercised under the High-Priest of our profession, as the Oxford school would teach, for Christ never transmitted his priesthood; but a pastoral act, performed by authority delegated from Christ as Chief Shepherd; for his pastorate he has transmitted and put into commission. He is the Chief Shepherd: his ministers, in subordination to him, are pastors of the flock.

Such are the sentiments which Methodism has learned from the Scriptures of truth, and which in her turn she teaches to those within her pale. The sacraments are administered devotionally and regularly by the Methodist

ministers in places which are solemnly set apart to the worship of God.

According to the practice of all ages, and according to the tenor of the covenant which God made with the father of the faithful, they admit infants into the church by baptism: they welcome to the Lord's table those "who do truly and earnestly repent of their sins, and are in love and charity with their neighbours, and who intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God;" and they are careful to exclude every person who is known to be immoral and impenitent. They are required to conduct the service in the impressive and devout language of the Liturgy of the Church of England, judiciously abridged by Mr. Wesley. To state all this is, to a certain extent, to defend Methodist sacraments; and, assuredly, when large and devout societies of Christian people are found to assemble at the table of the Lord, from month to month, and to join with seriousness and fervour in the holy communion, and then separate in order to show by a holy life that they participate in the grace of the sacrament—assuredly nothing but the bigotry of Popery, or that of Puseyism, its TWIN sister, would ever have asserted that sacraments like these were invalid or inefficacious.

It is objected, however, first, Your sacraments are no sacraments, because your ministers cannot consecrate the elements, not having the authority of those who, by regular succession, are the representatives of the apostles.

We reply, That the Scripture knows of no consecration except the separation of the elements to their intended use. And with regard to the administrators, Methodist ministers are as much in the succession of God's true ministers as any others, and as much conformed to apostolical order, as it would be easy to show from the Acts of the Apostles. They were not only inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon them this office and ministry, but outwardly called to it by others who were in the ministry before them. The first Methodist ministers were appointed by devout clergymen of the Church of England, at a time when the church was sunk in apathy, and the country was

sunk in sin; and as they preached the doctrine of salvation from guilt and sin through penitent faith in the blood of Christ, they were obliged to take the pastoral charge and oversight of those whom they converted, and which pastoral charge the Episcopal clergy at that time, generally speaking, neither could nor would exercise. Thus a Methodist succession was necessitated. Episcopal order was interfered with on principles which Hooker, Bishop Hall, Bishop Burnet, Archbishop Wake, and a host of others in the Church of England have recognised as right and scriptural. The Methodist ministers being put in the pastoral office and relation by Almighty God, they had no more right to withhold the sacraments from the people than to keep back that precious deposit of evangelical truth which they held in trust as the children of the Reformation. They were not unauthorized and self-appointed, as Puseyites assert. This is a fallacious cry, set up for the purpose of gaining a point which an appeal to the oracles of God would fail to gain. Every Methodist minister from the beginning has been put in his position by those who were in the ministry before him, and therefore in the succession before him. And in respect to the sanction and approbation of the Head of the church, let the history of the Methodist pastorate be reviewed; and if it will not bear to be compared with that of any church with regard to purity of morals, evangelical unction, aggressive zeal against practical heathenism, and Christian wisdom in upholding and extending the truth of God through the world, which is the true mark of a pastorate, then let the writer stand convicted of wicked effrontery.

Good men among ourselves might afford to smile at the contempt poured upon Methodist sacraments, and would do so, did they not perceive in this desperate attempt to Anglicize a popish dogma, a fearful hinderance to that true oneness for which our Saviour pleaded, which every true member of his mystic body must long and plead for, and not only because he wills it, but because the world cannot be converted without it—a oneness which no more excludes

presbyterial government than it includes schism or mutual repulsion.

But it is further objected, that Mr. Wesley, up to the time of his death, prohibited his preachers from administering the sacraments. This with some limitation is true. He prohibited them as a body. This he did as a clergyman of the Church of England, and as addressing professed members of that church, whom he exhorted to abide in it as long as they could. And sometimes his ecclesiastical predilections on this subject involved him, master of reasoning as he was, in inconvenience in argument. Mr. Wesley to the last wished to save Methodism in England to the established church, though this wish was to be defeated, considering the then circumstances of that church, by the tendency of his own doctrines, and most formally by the revived penalties of the obsolete Conventicle Act, joined to the practical intolerance of the clergy. Long before this, however, he and his brother Charles, and other ministers, as men yearning with compassion for the souls of men, had, in deference to the supreme authority of God's word, put the preachers into the Christian ministry ; so that whatever economical arrangement they, as professed Churchmen, might desire the preachers to observe during their lifetime, Methodist sacraments could not be withheld after their death. This is the true key to Mr. Wesley's conduct. As a clergyman of the establishment, he had generally prohibited the preachers from giving the sacraments, in the hope of conciliating the national clergy, and keeping Methodism in connection with the Church of England ; but as a catholic minister of Jesus Christ, intrusted with a great work of God, he had given them virtual authority already, by committing all the spiritual interests of the people to their care ; for true pastors are bound to administer the sacraments. And Mr. Charles Wesley himself, the higher churchman of the two, was the first to set the example of departure from canonical order, by administering to the colliers in the Methodist school at Kingswood, when they were driven away from the church at Bristol.



So fully, however, was Mr. Wesley secretly convinced that the Methodists would require to have their own sacraments sooner or later, that he *formally* ordained some of the preachers to administer them; those for America in 1784—when he organized the Methodist Episcopal Church, several years before the Protestant Episcopal Church was organized—and several others for Great Britain in 1789. It was on the former occasion that the Service-Book was prepared by abridgment from the Liturgy of the Church of England, in order that it might serve the Methodists on their sacramental occasions, and for ordination and other services, as long as they existed on earth. When the crisis after Mr. Wesley's death, before-mentioned, arrived, the British Conference were therefore bound to exercise an authority which had long been virtually, though not formally, lodged with them, by sanctioning expressly the Methodist administration of baptism and the Lord's supper.

But why are the ultra High-church clergy so anxious to hold up Mr. Wesley as a pure example, from which we have departed? False as the charge is, that we have departed from Mr. Wesley in principle, it may be asked, in return, Do these men acknowledge the validity of the sacraments which Mr. Wesley did allow? Would their bitter opposition have ceased, if his sanction had been unreserved and universal? When men, on the one hand, hold up Mr. Wesley to the Methodists as a correct but slighted example, and then turn round and exhibit him to their own people as an arch-heretic, there is something in all this so wrong, so opposed to the open, sincere, truth-loving spirit of the gospel, that the writer cannot trust himself to designate it as it deserves. The justification of Mr. Wesley's course rests upon the paramount authority of Scripture, which has sanctioned for ever that spiritual axiom, acknowledged even by good men in the Church of England, that "the salvation of souls is above all canons and rubrics;" and the Methodist pastorate, in giving the sacraments to their people, have no more in spirit and principle departed from him, than he in his day departed from the word of God.

A third objection raised against our sacraments is, that the Methodist Service-Book is but an abridgment of that Liturgy which Mr. Wesley professed to approve; and that in the Order for the Baptism of Infants particularly, those expressions are left out which recognise the actual and spiritual regeneration of those who receive this ordinance.

To this it is replied, That the Book was arranged by Mr. Wesley himself; and with regard to the omitted passages in question, the charge has more to do with the Methodist doctrine of regeneration than with the validity of a Methodist baptism; nevertheless, this matter also may be explained and defended in a few words.

Mr. Wesley evinced his attachment to the Church of England, not only by being slow and reluctant in departing, when a higher law called him, from her established order, but also by receiving her teaching, and adopting the very expressions in which that teaching is embodied. Thus in different places of his writings he admits, sometimes in the way of an *argumentum ad hominem*, and sometimes in the way of apparent recognition, the doctrine of baptismal regeneration; as, for instance, in his father's "Treatise on Baptism," reprinted in his works, and in his sermon "On the New Birth."

At the same time, if a candid man wished to become thoroughly acquainted with Mr. Wesley's views on the all-important subject of the regeneration of sinful human nature, he cannot stop here. He is bound to examine and compare the whole of his doctrinal works.

To go no farther than the passages in question, there are guarding clauses which very greatly modify the ultra High-church doctrine on this subject. Thus, in the passage in the Treatise, the blessing connected with baptism is explained to be "a principle of life;" simply a principle, without saying a word about its strength and power. And in the Sermon, he denies, in the case of adult baptisms, the invariable and simultaneous connection of the sign with the thing signified, distinguishing between being "born of water," and being "born of the Spirit;" and in the case of infants' baptisms, represents the church as

*supposing* (not asserting) the regeneration of infants at the time to take place. This clause would reduce the matter to a supposition, then, rather than to a doctrine. Again, in the same Treatise, he says, "Baptism doth now save us, if we live answerable thereto; if we repent, believe, and obey the gospel: supposing this, as it admits us into the church here, so into glory hereafter;"—an admission this which represents the general efficacy of baptism as conditionally dependent upon repentance, faith, and walking according to the gospel; conditions which cannot be fulfilled by infants till they come to riper years. Such are the guards which he throws around the lessons of his church.

But what are Mr. Wesley's views of regeneration itself? We find him always speaking of it as a blessing of nobler character and richer fulness; a blessing which is distinct from this of baptism, and does not grow out of it, except so far as all grace, diligently exercised, is the root of greater grace, and as all grace is received under the same evangelical covenant.

The entire scope and tenor of his sermon "On the New Birth" is to show that the regeneration of the Scriptures implies such a new nature as has power over all sin, and such as prompts to the continual service of God, under the strong influence of a grateful, holy, and filial state of heart; and in the sermon on "The Privilege of those that are born of God," it is represented in like manner.

So likewise Mr. Watson, speaking of the same blessing: "It is that mighty change in man, wrought by the Holy Spirit, by which the dominion which sin has over him in his natural state, and which he deplores and struggles against in his penitent state, is broken and abolished; so that, with full choice of will, and the energy of right affections, he serves God freely, and 'runs in the way of his commandments.'" And let it be observed, the regeneration described in the Bible applies solely to the case of adult believers. The nature of regeneration, with its fruits, is thus stated in the Scripture: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin." "Sin shall not have

dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." Moreover, the apostle's argument in Rom. viii. 1, absolutely requires us to take the phrase "in Christ Jesus" as expressive of the state of one who is justified by faith alone, and to whom there is now no condemnation. Let any one read what goes before and what follows after in this Epistle, without regard to chapter and verse, and he cannot come to any other conclusion. He then who is thus "in Christ" is said in another place of the apostle to be "a new creature;" that is, one who is born again; so that, in the apostle's order, regeneration follows pardon, though there is no interval of time between; and this order Mr. Wesley clearly and fully acknowledges in his sermon "On God's Vineyard," in these words: "Who then is a Christian according to the light which God hath vouchsafed his people? He that being justified by faith hath peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and at the same time is 'born again,' 'born from above,' 'born of the Spirit,' inwardly changed from the image of the devil, to that image of God wherein he was created."

From the whole of this it may be confidently concluded, that although Mr. Wesley acknowledged a blessing in baptism, even in infant baptism, and used the language of the Church in describing it, yet he carefully distinguished it from that great salvation from the guilt and power of sin which the Scriptures call justification and regeneration. And thus he left out of the Service-Book expressions which might only tend to perplex and agitate the minds of those who, to say the least, were less committed to the Church of England Liturgy as a whole than he was himself. He regarded baptism as the *λουτρον*, the bath or washing of regeneration, the outward sign; attended with such degrees of grace as the recipient could at the time receive, according to his maturity of nature, and obedience to the terms of the evangelical covenant; but the spiritual blessing just described he alone regarded as "the renewing of

the Holy Ghost," the inward part of regeneration. And hence, Mr. Wesley, as it is well known, preached regeneration as zealously and fervently to those ungodly individuals who had been baptized at the church in infancy, as he did to any other sinners whatever.

From these views the Methodists have not departed: they acknowledge a blessing in baptism derived from the covenant of God, the prayers of saints, and the intercession of Christ; but they acknowledge that alone to be the true scriptural regeneration which is connected with power over sin, and with filial affections, and is concomitant with the justification of our persons.

With regard to the Lord's supper, but little need be said. Our Communion Service is taken nearly word for word from the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England: our mode of administration is the same as hers, kneeling being regarded as the sinner's proper posture: with her we attach its administration to the pastoral office: with her we reject transubstantiation and consubstantiation; neither believing that the bread and wine are changed into the real body and blood of Christ, nor that his body and blood permeate those elements; but that "the body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the supper only after a heavenly and spiritual manner, and the mean whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the supper is faith."—*Article 18th.*

With Hooker, we "see not which way it should be gathered by the words of Christ, when and where the bread is his body, or the cup his blood, but only in the very heart and soul of him which receiveth them. As for the sacraments, they really exhibit, but for aught we can gather out of that which is written of them, they are not really, nor do really contain in themselves, that grace which with them, or by them, it pleaseth God to bestow."\*

Bishop Jewel precedes him with similar sentiments; and to show that the fathers themselves, who speak so rhetorically respecting the sacraments, meant to speak

---

\* Eccles. Pol. b. v.

evangelically, he says, "Thus are we plainly taught by the Catholic learned Fathers, to put a difference between the sacrament and the body of Christ, and that the one of them is not really lapped up or shut within the other: that the one (as Epiphanius saith) is utterly void of sense; the other whole sense, and whole sensible: the one is received to destruction unto some, as St. Augustine saith; the other is received of all men unto life: that the one is a figure, as Chrysostom saith; the other is a truth." \*

Moreover we do not forget that it is our privilege so to "eat the flesh of Christ and to drink his blood, that our sinful souls and bodies may be made clean by his death, and washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him and he in us."—*Communion Service*. Nor that, as Mr. Watson says, "he who truly receives these elements, discerning their intent and exerting faith in the great object represented, which is Christ's sacrifice for sin, not only thus publicly and statedly professes his acceptance of that sacrifice, as the only ground of his hope of salvation, and his sole dependence upon it, but actually derives to himself its stupendous benefits." † In full accordance with the views which have been expressed are the sentiments of our sacramental hymn:

"Jesus, at whose supreme command,  
We now approach to God,  
Before us in thy vesture stand,  
Thy vesture dipp'd in blood.  
The tokens of thy dying love  
O let us all receive;  
And feel the quick'ning Spirit move,  
And sensibly believe!

"The living bread, sent down from heaven,  
In us vouchsafe to be:  
Thy flesh for all the world is given,  
And all may live by thee.  
Now, Lord, on us thy flesh bestow,  
And let us drink thy blood,  
Till all our souls are fill'd below  
With all the life of God." ‡

---

\* Jewel on the Sacraments, p. 278.

† Watson's Exposition, Matt. xxvi. 26.

‡ Hymn Book of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, p. 217.

And now to repeat our question. How is it that this holy sacrament is defiled and nullified by passing through Methodist hands? What have our opponents, substantiating their claim by clear proof, which we have not? The administrators of our sacraments, (if we must speak of them,) for personal godliness and knowledge of vital Christianity, will bear comparison, taking them church for church, with any who have appeared since the primitive times: and however High-church writers may deride religious experience, the writer can never banish the recollection of hallowed sacramental seasons among his own people at which the Spirit has so sensibly glorified Christ, as to diffuse through the hearts of all present, according to their separate confession, a sacred peace which never could be expressed, and a conscious union of themselves with each other, and with their Lord, which could not be otherwise than divinely imparted. And not only has this been the case in the public sanctuary, but likewise in the still room of the sick and dying Christian.

In submitting his remarks on this subject, the writer has been anxious to avoid the use of that reviling and contemptuous language in which many of the opponents of his views have been wont to indulge, and as well, that lofty and dogmatic strain adopted by many of the younger High-church clergy. Young and newly-ordained men of that school, take up selected common-places from their masters on these subjects with the utmost delight, as long as this teaching tends to invest them with sacerdotal dignity; and thus they speak of Lutheran, Presbyterian, and Methodist sacraments with undisguised contempt. But a profounder acquaintance with Christian theology, if honestly prosecuted, would mightily abate this confidence, and lead to tempers and views more consistent and catholic.

If Methodism cannot stand without being defended with similar weapons, let it fall. A portion of wood, hay, and stubble, it might appear some day that we have builded with our better materials; for the church may err; but as long as the day of declaration has yet to come, and the final, searching fire to burn, let none speak too proudly of

the part that they have raised in the great edifice of the catholic church.

Methodism, we repeat, is essentially catholic, and is as capable of being put into those external relations which the Providence of God may deem necessary for the promotion of universal peace, and truth, and righteousness, as any other ecclesiastical system. But with regard to its doctrine, discipline, and internal administration, these have been so consecrated by the possession of that vital Christianity which has been seen in the holy lives, the socially regenerating influence, and the happy deaths of thousands and tens of thousands, that it would be better for its guardians to go to prison and to death, than commit the traitorous act of allowing them to be merged in a cold, worldly, and Romanizing system, like that which now claims its unconditional submission.

---

## THE LORD'S SUPPER A MEANS OF GRACE.

BY CHARLES WESLEY.

THOU God of boundless power and grace,  
How wonderful are all thy ways,  
How far above our loftiest thought:  
In presence of the meanest things,  
While all from thee the virtue springs,  
Thy most stupendous works are wrought.

Struck by a stroke of Moses' rod,  
The parting sea confess'd its God,  
And high in crystal bulwarks rose:  
At Moses' beck it burst the chain,  
Return'd to all its strength again,  
And swept to hell thy church's foes.



Let but thy ark the walls surround,  
Let but the ram's-horn trumpets sound,  
The city boasts its height no more :  
Its bulwarks are at once o'erthrown,  
Its massy walls by air blown down,  
They fall before almighty power.

Jordan at thy command shall heal  
The sore disease incurable,  
And wash out all the leper's stains ;  
Or oil the medicine shall supply,  
Or clothes, or shadows passing by,  
If so thy sovereign will ordains.

Yet not from these the power proceeds,  
Trumpets, or rods, or clothes, or shades,  
Thy only arm the work hath done :  
If instruments thy wisdom choose,  
Thy grace confers their saving use :  
Salvation is from God alone.

Thou in this sacramental bread  
Dost now our hungry spirits feed,  
And cheer us with the hallow'd wine,  
Communion of thy flesh and blood,  
We banquet on immortal food,  
And drink the streams of life divine.

## SUBJECTS AND MODE OF BAPTISM.

---

### SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM.

1. ANTIPÆDOBAPTISTS contend that as believers only are mentioned by our Lord in his commission to the apostles, no other persons ought to be baptized, and that the apostles did not baptize any besides. This is denied for the following reasons: 1. Neither the texts referred to, Mark xvi. 15, 16; Acts ii. 41; viii. 12, 37, nor any other, say that *none* are to be baptized except believers. They are mere examples of the baptism of adult *proselytes*, on their first hearing the gospel, and believing on Jesus as the Messiah, and prove *nothing* either for or against the baptism of infants and little children. There is no dispute that wherever the gospel is preached, every adult *proselyte*, whether Jew or Gentile, must be received into the church by baptism; and these examples prove nothing more. 2. To argue the case of *children* from what is said of *adults* is utterly *absurd*. Our Lord's commission will furnish a much stronger argument against the *salvation* of all infants than against their baptism. "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved," faith is put before *salvation* as well as before baptism; if it be true, therefore, that infants ought not to be baptized, it is *equally true* that they *cannot* be saved. "He that believeth not shall be damned." Infants cannot *believe*. Is it true, therefore, that all who die in infancy shall be *damned*? Where is it said that he who believeth not shall not be baptized? No such text can be found. The words, therefore, supply a much stronger

proof against infant *salvation* than against infant baptism. The Saviour, also, in his preaching, restricted salvation to believers: "He that believeth not is condemned." "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." John iii. 18, 36. For one text where faith and baptism are connected together, it is easy to produce *twenty* where faith and salvation are united. Our opponents grant that these texts do not prove that all infants are damned. If then this class of texts, beyond all comparison the most numerous and explicit, does not prove that infants are *without* a title to salvation, how can the other prove them to be without a title to baptism? The apostle says, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha." *Infants* do not love Christ, are they therefore *accursed*? "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, taking vengeance on all them that obey not the gospel." Infants do *not* obey the gospel: are they therefore objects of his righteous vengeance? But we have said more than enough to prove the monstrous absurdity and utterly anti-christian character of such reasoning. And this is the true and *conclusive* answer to all the ignorant declamation we sometimes read, or hear, about baptism being *this, that, and the other*, which infants cannot *be* or *do*. Whatever allusion there may be, in several passages of Scripture, to the state of adult believers, in connection with baptism, infants are *not* required to perform the duties of adults, and therefore such allusions are not intended to apply to them.

2. The *scriptural* title of children to admission into the visible church of Christ, and consequently, to Christian baptism, is proved by the fact, that they are included in the COVENANT of REDEMPTION. They have been, from the very beginning, the objects of the most gracious promises, and of all the provisions, privileges, and benefits of the covenant of grace. That the children were all members of the Patriarchal church admits of no dispute; and when God first selected the seed of Abraham to be a *peculiar* people to himself, formed

them into a visible church, with divinely appointed institutions of public worship, and other special religious privileges, their CHILDREN were ALL admitted into it, by the appointed RITE, when *only* EIGHT DAYS old, and their parents were directed to teach them all God's commandments, with uniform diligence and constancy.

3. The right of children to this ordinance is further established by the fact, that the Abrahamic and the Christian covenants are one and the same, Abraham being the father both of believing Jews and Gentiles. Romans iv., and Gal. iii. 6-9, 13-18, 29. The covenants, therefore, being *identical*, and ALL the children being entitled to admission, by the appointed *rite*, to the benefits of the *one*, they are, with equal clearness and certainty, entitled to the privileges of the *other*, unless they have been deprived of it by subsequent revelation, as *clear* and *express* as the original institution which conferred it. This right of believers' children is further demonstrated by the *fact*, that baptism, as the rite of admission into the Christian church, has succeeded to circumcision, which was the rite of admission into the Levitical church. As this ONE *fact* overturns the whole Antipædobaptist scheme, they have attempted to deny it. But their denial is useless, because it is not matter of argument, but of *fact*. It cannot be denied that the *Levitical* dispensation of the church was *abolished*, and the *Evangelical* dispensation *established*—it cannot be denied that *circumcision* was abrogated, and *baptism* instituted—it cannot be denied that *circumcision* was the appointed rite of *admission* into the Levitical church, and that *baptism* is the appointed rite of admission into the Christian church:—then it *cannot be denied* that BAPTISM has *succeeded* to CIRCUMCISION. Both ordinances rested on the same ground, namely, that of divine authority, were both appointed for the same purpose, and were each to be coextensive with the dispensation to which it belonged. And were it not so, it would be a fact, that the Christian church is left *without any rite of admission* at all, which is impossible. It,

therefore, *undeniably* follows, that the children of Christian parents have as INDUBITABLE a *right* to the *one*, namely, BAPTISM, as Jewish children had to the *other*, namely, CIRCUMCISION.

I am quite aware that Antipædobaptists have asserted that circumcision was merely a national distinction, having reference solely to the temporal part of the Abrahamic covenant. This, however, is entirely a mistake, and point-blank contradicts the apostle. "And he (Abraham) received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had being uncircumcised" Rom. iv. 11. This one passage puts the matter beyond the reach of controversy. Still we may add, by way of illustration, that *unquestionable* historical FACTS prove the same thing. 1. If circumcision had had relation to the temporal part of the covenant and the possession of Judea only, then, as a matter of course, it would have been limited to the line of Isaac and Jacob, for to them only was the temporal promise made; but, so far from that, the fact was that circumcision extended to all Abraham's posterity, including the descendants both of Ishmael and Esau, which proves that although excluded from Judea, and the special privileges connected with the possession of it, they were not excluded from the blessings of the spiritual covenant. 2. ALL *proselytes* to the Jewish religion were *circumcised*, notwithstanding which they did not abandon their own country and connections to dwell in the promised land. 3. The slaves, or purchased servants, of the Hebrews were circumcised, not because they lived in Judea, but because they were required to *forsake* their heathen abominations, to *worship* the TRUE GOD, and conform to the Jewish religion.

Further, that the design of circumcision and baptism was strictly identical, not only appears—1. From the fact previously stated, that circumcision was the sole rite of initiation into the Levitical church, and that after the Saviour's resurrection, when the gate of the common salvation was thrown open to all nations, then baptism was constituted the sole right of admission to both Jews and

Gentiles. But also—2. From the facts, that as circumcision was the *seal* of the *Abrahamic* covenant, by which all who submitted to it were thereby brought under its *obligations*, and entitled to its *promises*, so, in like manner, *baptism* is the appointed seal of the *Christian* covenant. 3. Circumcision was the *sign* of that inward and outward holiness which is the end of all God's institutions. Rom. ii. 28, 29; Deut. xxx. 6. So likewise is baptism: we must be "born" not "of water only," but also "of the Spirit." It is "the washing of regeneration," the washing by which spiritual regeneration, or *real holiness*, is signified. Titus iii. 5, 6. But, as a *sign*, baptism is *more* than circumcision, it is the visible type of the glorious effusion of the Holy Spirit under the gospel dispensation. "According to his mercy, he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed," or *poured out*, "on us abundantly through Jesus Christ." I have no doubt, for this among other reasons, baptism was substituted for circumcision, because baptism by effusion, or pouring, was a natural symbol of the heavenly gift. 4. The apostle's doctrine, Col. ii. 10–12, and Gal. iii. 27–29, is conclusive on this point. In the first of these passages he calls baptism "the circumcision of Christ;" and in the last he states, most distinctly, that, "as many as have been baptized into Christ are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise;" which had been impossible, unless baptism had been substituted for circumcision.

The objection, sometimes made, that baptism cannot have been substituted for circumcision, because the latter was administered to one sex only, is mere *evasion*, or, what is worse, sheer *impiety*. Our opponents will not pretend to deny that both sexes were equally admitted into the Jewish church, and became members of it in their *infancy*. Although the right of initiation could only be administered to *one* sex, its design and obligation extended equally to *both*. The entire church and nation, *male* and *female*, were brought under the same covenant engagements to worship the TRUE GOD, to serve Him

in universal holiness, to mortify every *irregular* desire, and rigorously to abstain from all those licentious indulgences which, in fact, constituted the most seductive abomination of idol worship. This, objection, therefore, can have no force except against circumcision *itself*, and thereby to demonstrate the *profane* tendency of the Anti-pædobaptist scheme, by leading those who embrace it to quarrel with God's ordinance because it does not comport with their notions of *fitness* and *propriety*. The Levitical rite of initiation being applicable to one sex only, accorded with the *genius* of that dispensation which left women in a condition greatly inferior to that of men; but "in Christ there is neither male nor female"—the previous inferiority of the latter being done away, *both* sexes are entitled to the same privileges in the Evangelical church. This is strongly intimated by *baptism*, the rite of initiation being administered to both sexes *equally*; and this might be another important reason of its being substituted for circumcision, which could be administered to *one* only.

4. It is also of great importance in this argument, that when proselytes were admitted into the Jewish church, all their children, of whatever AGE, were admitted with them. I repeat, it is an *undeniable* fact that when the parents became proselytes, *ALL THEIR CHILDREN*, as well as servants, were admitted with them. So that when our Lord appointed baptism to be the *SOLE* rite of initiation into his church, leaving out circumcision, it was perfectly superfluous and unnecessary for him to give any express direction for the baptism of the children of proselytes, or believers; because it was the *EXISTING*, the *UNIVERSAL PRACTICE*, to admit children with their parents. It was impossible for them to understand his words with any other meaning or intention, because *that* was consistent both with the *prevailing practice* and the *divine institution*. In their circumstances, therefore, the apostles could not have admitted *parents* and rejected *their children*, unless they had been required to do so by express enactment. *Unless*

our Lord had informed them, that although children had been, to that time, universally received into the church, HE had *now* abrogated their great privilege, and that *children* were henceforth to be excluded. Not one such word is to be found; and how absolutely all this would contradict the *reiterated* sentiments, the entire *character* and *conduct* of the Saviour, and the whole *genius* and *design* of the Christian dispensation, I need not insist upon more at large. That which has once been expressly *enacted* cannot lose its authority till it be expressly *repealed*. A DIVINE LAW is not to be cancelled by mere inferences and deductions. The fact is, that the children of believers, whether *native Jews* or *proselytes*, were, BY DIVINE COMMAND, admitted into the church of God in their *infancy*. So it had been from the *beginning*—SO it CONTINUED *without interruption*. Our Lord *by not changing* CONFIRMED it, and thereby stamped upon it the final SEAL of his OWN *authority*.

5. Although I consider the preceding to be entirely conclusive, and perfectly inexpugnable, yet I will proceed to show that it receives the strongest possible confirmation from the express words both of our Lord himself and the great apostle of the Gentiles. Our opponents suppose that the establishment of Christianity changed not only the rite, but also the *subjects* of initiation into the church. This they have vainly attempted to *prove*. Our Lord teaches the *contrary*. "Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Our Lord here states that "the kingdom of God," which is his *church*, should be taken from the *unbelieving Jews*, and given to the *believing Gentiles*. But the "taking away" and "giving" of a thing does not import any *change* in the thing taken and given, but the *transfer*—a passing of the thing from one to another. When the church of God was *transferred* from the Jews to the Gentiles, ALL that was "taken away" from the *former* was "given" to the *latter*. Our opponents admit that the church state among the Jews consisted in the membership of *adults*



and *infants*: then the church state among the Gentiles must consist of *adults* and *infants* also, because the same that was taken away from the Jews was given to the Gentiles. And thus it appears, even from God's dispensations to the Gentiles, that the church membership of *infants* was not set aside. The same fact is, if possible, more evident from the language of the great apostle, Rom. xi. 23, 24. "And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. For if thou wert cut out of the olive-tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive-tree, how much more shall these which be the natural branches be grafted into their own olive-tree?" 1. The olive-tree denotes a visible church state. 2. The Jews are said to be natural branches, because they are descended from Abraham, to whom the promise was made. 3. The Gentiles were brought into the same church state from which the Jews were broken off. 4. The apostle suggesteth that "the Jews will again be grafted in their own olive-tree." Two things are here irresistibly proved. First, that the Gentiles are now placed in the same church relation as the Jews formerly were, and, therefore, that *infants* are just as much included in the *Christian* as they were in the *Jewish* church. The second is, that when the Jews shall be again grafted into their own olive-tree, they must of necessity be restored to the *same* church state as that from which they were cut off: it inevitably follows, that their *infant* children will be included in the *Christian*, just as they were in the *Jewish* church.

Our limits will only allow a very brief notice of another point, closely connected with the preceding. Rom. xi. 17: "And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive-tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive-tree, boast not thyself against the branches." The apostle's words prove that there was no discontinuance of the church—"some branches were broken off," NOT ALL. Those who believed *retained* their church

relation to God. Believing Gentiles were “grafted in among them,” and with them constituted one church, “partaking of the root and fatness of the olive-tree.” If the church state continued, then *the membership of infants continued*. Believing Gentiles were in *this*, as in *all* other things, elevated to an equality with believing Jews. Antipædobaptists can have only one way of attempting to evade the force of this, which is by denying the fact, and maintaining either that the ancient church was entirely destroyed, or that believing Gentiles were not united to it. Whichever way they take, *their system is destroyed*. If they maintain the entire dissolution of the church, then they point-blank *contradict* the Scriptures in *general*, and our Lord and the apostle Paul in *particular*. If they admit that the ancient church was continued, and the Gentiles “grafted in among them,” which is the real truth, then their cause is *ruined* that way. For, as *infants* were admitted into the *apostolic* church, all those denominations who continue to *admit* INFANTS conform to the APOSTOLIC MODEL, while those who *reject* them CONTRADICT the *apostolic practice*.

6. We come next to another class of facts recorded in the New Testament, *viz.* that the apostles baptized whole households or families. TWELVE such instances are mentioned. Their conduct, in this respect, was in perfect accordance with the authorized admissions into the church of God throughout its *whole history*, as well as with the commission they had received. I am quite aware that it is said, “there is no express mention of little children, and that, consequently, we cannot prove that there were any.” Infants and little children not being mentioned in so many words, is of very little consequence; because, 1. Having already proved that it was the practice of the ancient church, down to the very time of our Lord, to admit children in their *infancy*, which practice was positively *enjoined* by divine authority, and as our Lord changed the rite of admission *only*, and *not* the SUBJECTS, his apostles had no authority to do *that* which HE himself had not done. and must, therefore, have

understood their commission in that sense, consequently they could do no other than baptize the children with their parents. And whatever number of children there might be in the families baptized by the apostles, those families are mentioned just as might be expected in a narrative of such extreme brevity, when relating their usual practice. 2. When it is also remembered that our Lord and the apostle Paul have both established the decisive fact of the church's identity and continuance, and the incorporation of believing Gentiles with it, thereby demonstrating that as adults and infants were admitted to church membership among the Jews, they were equally so among the Gentiles, the PROOF is *irresistible*, and to overthrow it is utterly *impossible*. 3. The best authorities on the subject prove that the Greek word used by the apostles signifies families *of children*. I will here introduce a passage from the editor of Calmet:—"The natural import of the term οἶκος, *oikos*, family, includes children of all ages. In proof, I offer you *fifty* examples; if *fifty* are not sufficient, I offer you a *hundred*; if a *hundred* are not sufficient, *two hundred*; if *two hundred* are not sufficient, *four hundred*. I affirm that *oikos* very often expresses the presence of infants: of this I offer you *fifty* examples; and if you admit classical instances, *fifty* more. I tell you also, that somewhat more than *three hundred* instances have been examined, and have proved perfectly satisfactory."

7. Infants and little children are undoubtedly in a state of salvation. Matthew xix. 14: Our Lord says, that "of such is the kingdom of heaven." If our opponents say that "the kingdom of heaven" signifies the church upon earth, *then* the question is settled. If the Saviour meant "the kingdom of" glory in "heaven," then, if "little children" are heirs of *future* GLORY, they are *most certainly* qualified for admission into the church on *earth*. If it were even necessary for candidates to be in a state of salvation before their admission into the church by baptism, *this would not exclude infants, for they are actually* in that state. Whether the Anti-

pædobaptists can understand how this can be, or not, is nothing to the purpose, since our Lord declares the *fact*. Their sneers about "unconscious babes" only shows the unholy tendency of their system. When the Scriptures destroy *their* scheme, then they sneer at the scriptural *institution*, and consequently at its divine Author *himself*. For *Christian* "babes" are no more unconscious than *Jewish* "babes," and just as capable of receiving all the benefits of the CHRISTIAN, as they were of the Levitical church.

To object to infant baptism because infants are not capable of receiving the Lord's supper is mere trifling, utterly unworthy of grave argument, and to which they are driven by the necessities of their scheme. Christian infants are just as capable of understanding the meaning and intention of the Lord's supper, as Jewish infants the design of the Passover. Youth and children of riper years either have piety, or they ought to have it. If they are truly converted to God, or even real penitents waiting for salvation, then it is their duty to "show forth the Lord's death till he come." If not, Antipædobaptists have no right to make the sin of either parents or children an objection to Christ's institution, which He ordained to be a covenant obligation upon both—upon parents to "train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,"—upon children thus trained up to walk in the faith, love, and obedience of the gospel. Indeed, this, like most of their other objections, would have been entirely unworthy of notice, were it not for their constant efforts to mislead the members of other denominations.

8. I will conclude this part of the subject by showing that there is satisfactory historical proof that the baptism of infants prevailed from the time of the apostles. Indeed, it may here very justly be asked, "If infant baptism was not practised by the apostles and primitive churches, *when* and *where* did the innovation commence?" "If it be a human invention, how came it to be so universal during the first three hundred years, and yet no record left when

it was first introduced, nor any dispute or controversy about it?" To these questions our opponents can give no answer. On the other hand, we can point out the only ancient writer who opposed infant baptism. This was Tertullian, who lived late in the second century, and who was a very weak and superstitious man. But then, 1. His opposition to it proved that the practice existed more anciently than himself. 2. He never opposed it on the ground of its being an innovation, or that it was not the practice of the apostles, which, had it been true, he might easily have proved, as he lived so early; but *only* on the ground of *silly* and *superstitious* notions which then began to prevail about the extraordinary efficacy of this ordinance in taking away all previous sins. So that he opposed the baptism of *widows and unmarried persons*, on account of the temptations to which they are liable; and many persons were induced to put off baptism till as near death as possible, under the notion of its being more safe. 3. Even Tertullian admitted that *infants* might be baptized if they were in danger of death. All which proves that he objected to infant baptism on grounds entirely different from the Antipædobaptists. And so little were his absurdities regarded, that they appear to have been afterward entirely forgotten. IRENÆUS, who lived in the SECOND century, and who was intimately acquainted with Polycarp, who was St. John's disciple, declares expressly that the church learned from the apostles to baptize children. JUSTIN MARTYR, who also lived before the middle of the SECOND century, says, Several persons among us, of *sixty and seventy* years old, of both sexes, who were disciplined to Christ in their INFANCY, do continue uncorrupt." Here again infant baptism is carried up to the time of the apostle John. ORIGEN, in the third century, affirms that the custom of baptizing INFANTS was received from Christ and his apostles. CYPRIAN, and a council of bishops, amounting to *sixty-six*, held about the year 254, unanimously agreed that INFANTS might be baptized as soon as they were BORN. This was their conclusion upon

the question whether or not a child might be baptized before the eighth day of his age, which was the only controversy on infant baptism in the early ages of the church,—for the propriety of the practice was never denied—and this abortive attempt to restrict baptism, like circumcision, to the eighth day after birth, shows that the early church considered it to have succeeded to that rite, as the seal of God's covenant with his people and their seed. Ambrose, who wrote about two hundred and seventy years from the apostles, declares that the baptism of infants had been the practice of the apostles themselves, and of the church till that time. In the fifth century, St. CHRYSOSTOM says that the Christian church *everywhere* declares that INFANTS should be baptized. And AUGUSTIN, in the same century, affirms that he never *heard*, or read, of any Christian, *catholic* or *sectarian*, but who taught that INFANTS were to be baptized. WALL states, that before the year 1150 no society ever pretended that it was unlawful to baptize infants.

I shall now proceed a step farther, and observe that there is not the slightest authority, from CHRIST and his APOSTLES, for baptizing the adult *descendants* of believing parents. Consequently, both the *opinions* and the *practice* of Antipædobaptists are every way *erroneous* and unfounded. When they oppose the baptism of infants and little children, they oppose the Saviour and his apostles; and when they baptize the *adult descendants* of Christian parents, they do so *without* authority from either. *The practice originated with THEMSELVES—it is entirely HUMAN.\** Further, as neither the Acts of the Apostles, the Apostolical Epistles, nor early ecclesiastical history, contain the least allusion to the *unbaptized adult children* of believing parents, it is utterly *impossible* for

---

\* The baptism of any individual descendants of Christian parents who, from circumstances, may not have been previously baptized, is, of course, not included in these observations. The practice of baptizing the adult descendants of believers, on Antipædobaptist principles, only is intended.

such a class of persons to have existed. They must therefore have been baptized in their *infancy*.\* Here, then, we have another *irrefragable* proof that Antipædobaptists act not only without authority, but *against* it.

Finally, on this part of the subject, I proceed to show, that the *principle* on which Antipædobaptism is *professedly* founded, CONTRADICTS their own *practice*, and destroys *their own* system. Their professed principle is, that "every positive rite or institution, to be of divine authority, must have a positive *precept* or *example* of Christ or his apostles, without reasoning or inference." Where then, I ask, is "the positive precept or example" for the *first day* Sabbath, for *female* communion, or for baptizing the *adult descendants* of believing parents? THERE IS NO SUCH THING! Let Antipædobaptists, therefore, *only act upon their own* PRINCIPLE, and there is an *absolute end of their whole* SCHEME. And where is the COMMON SENSE, or common HONESTY, of requiring an "express precept or example" in ONE particular case, and of acting without it in so many OTHERS of a like nature. Let Antipædobaptists act *consistently* upon their own principle, and they must go back to the *seventh* day, or JEWISH Sabbath: they must next expel all FEMALES from the churches, by repelling them from the *Lord's table*; and they must also cease to baptize the ADULT descendants of Christian parents. There would then be a dissolution and END of their whole system: they would no longer disturb the churches of Christ with their peculiarities; and if they were to exchange their proselyting and party restlessness for additional efforts to "convert sinners from the error of their way," none would have more reason to rejoice than themselves.

---

\* This receives the strongest additional confirmation from the fact that little children are immediately addressed in the apostolic epistles, and directed to "obey their parents in the Lord," and "obey their parents in all things," &c.

## MODE OF BAPTISM.

1. Antipædobaptists contend for the application of the *person* to the water by immersion or dipping; and, according to them, nothing short of being entirely *submerged*, or covered with the element, is to comply with the ordinance of Christ. On the contrary, I intend to prove that Christian baptism is the application of *water* to the person; and that the action is *sprinkling* or *pouring*.

(1.) With respect to *Baptizo*, notwithstanding the very great importance our opponents attach to it, it has been often shown that the word itself proves *nothing*. It is easy for Antipædobaptists to assert that its proper meaning is to immerse, and that when our Lord commanded his apostles to baptize, it was a command to plunge or dip them only; but it is not possible for themselves to believe it, unless their judgments be so warped by their system as to prevent their understanding the facts of the case. They may cite "Dr. John Jones's excellent Greek Lexicon," &c.; but neither that, nor any similar authority, proves any thing at all against its *true* signification as employed by the ancient Greek classical authors. Out of a great number, I have selected the following as instances: "to *paint*, or smear the face with colours," Aristophanes: to throw stones down *upon* a ship, "those from *above* baptizing the ships with stones and engines," Dion. Cassius: "the frog breathless fell, and the lake was *baptized* with blood," Homer. Plutarch speaks of "the mind being *baptized* with too much toil," and the comparison is to flowers having too much water *sprinkled* or *poured* upon them. Athenæus, "I have been *baptized* with wine." Suidas, that "the hollow of the hand was *baptized* with the blood that *fell* into it." Is it not natural to ask, Was the face *dipped* into the colours? Were the ships *plunged* into the stones which *fell upon* them from above? Was the lake *dipped* into the blood of a frog? or Athenæus into the wine he drank? or, in the instance from Suidas, was the hand plunged into the



blood which only *fell* into the hollow of it? &c. The Rev. W. Thorn has produced forty-two different senses, as cited by Antipædobaptists themselves, in which *baptizo* and its correlative terms are used by ancient Greek writers. The fact then *demonstrably* is, that a term which admits of so general and various an application can decide nothing in this controversy.

(2.) The next point is of greater consequence, *viz.* the meaning of the term *baptizo* in the Septuagint version of the Old Testament and the Apocrypha. If Antipædobaptists were to succeed in proving that its meaning, in profane authors, is favourable to their scheme, still it would be of *little* value, unless they could also prove that it has the same meaning in the *inspired* writers, especially when used to express divinely appointed rites of *purification*. And here let it be most distinctly stated, that our opponents have not yet produced ONE clear instance of *immersion* from the WHOLE BIBLE, and therefore that they are not able to do so. There were “*divers baptisms*” under the law, as we shall presently see. Those *baptisms* were generally performed by the priest; but among the various rites by which he was to *sanctify* and *cleanse* a person, and receive him into the church, he was never once directed to *dip* or *plunge* him in water, but only to “sprinkle” it upon him. A priest’s plunging a person, whether man or woman, is a ceremony absolutely *strange* and *unheard-of* throughout the *whole* of the sacred Scriptures. Even the purification of priests themselves was by sprinkling, Ex. xxix. 20, 21—so likewise in the case of Levites, Numbers viii. 7—and the cleansing of the leper, Lev. xiv. 7—the water of separation, Numbers xix. 18, 19, &c. The people in a mass were sanctified by a little blood sprinkled upon a very few of them. Ex. xxiv. 8. See also Hebrews ix. 13, 19. A thing altogether distinct from the ritual purifications by the priests, and sometimes in addition to them, was, that the people, in certain specified uncleannesses, were commanded to *wash* themselves with water; but even *they* were never commanded to

*immerse* themselves—a thing not only unnecessary for the end designed, as several other modes of washing would cleanse them more *effectually* than immersion, but **PHYSICALLY impossible** in their circumstances. For how could *two millions* of people habitually plunge themselves, for forty years, in that *desert*, “that *great and terrible* wilderness, where there was **NO WATER?**” Deut. viii. 15.

(3.) The living bird, and the cedar wood, and the scarlet and the hyssop, were to be *baptized* in the blood of the bird that had been killed, Lev. xiv. 6; but in this case also total immersion was impossible. “Thou shalt baptize me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me.” Job ix. 31. That he did not mean to be *submerged*, plunged over head and ears in the mud, is clear. Sisera’s prey is mentioned as needlework *baptized* with colours, on both sides—Judges v. 30—that is, not *dipped* in colours, but the colours *put on* with the embroiderer’s needle. Nebuchadnezzar’s body was “*baptized* with the dew of heaven”—Daniel iv. 33: the dew dropped *upon* it, from above. “Judith (xii. 7) *baptized* herself in the fountain of Bethulia.” Ceremonial *purification* is undoubtedly intended. It was not necessary for this purpose, nor was it therefore at all likely, if it were even possible, that a beautiful, a delicate, and an educated female, would plunge herself, night after night, either clothed or unclothed, at a well, in a *camp*, guarded with the utmost vigilance, and surrounded by 200,000 soldiers.

(4.) It is time to proceed to the New Testament, and here a few instances must suffice. Mark vii. 3, 4; Luke xi. 38: “The Pharisees and all the Jews, except they *baptized* their hands oft, eat not: when they come from market, except they *baptize*, they eat not:” they also hold “the baptizing of cups and pots, of brazen vessels and tables,” or couches. In whatever way the hands were *baptized*, the Jews could not infer from that the immersion of the whole body under water. “Elisha, the son of Shaphat, *poured* water ON the hands of Elijah.” 2 Kings iii. 11. The same custom prevails in Persia to this

day. In the same manner the feet were washed: "Thou gavest me no water *upon (epi)* my feet." Luke vii. 44. "Brazen vessels" were not cleansed by a momentary submerging of them under water and raising them out again, but, in the ordinary sense, by pouring water into them, and rubbing or wiping them with a cloth. And as to couches, on which they reclined at meals, and which were constructed for *three* or *five* persons, for them to be *plunged* entirely under the water was out of the question. All these, in fact, were ceremonial purifications, or baptisms, and performed mostly by *sprinkling*. 1 Cor. x. 2. It is said that the people were "*baptized*" unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." Immersion is here altogether out of the case. The Israelites were not *immersed* in the sea, for they walked over "*on dry ground*." Ex. xiv. 22. They were not *immersed* in the cloud, for that was *above* them. If either the spray from the sea, or the descent of rain from the cloud be referred to, they were "*baptized*" by *sprinkling* from above, by "*rain*" and "*droppings*" from the "*cloud*" which directed the march of the Israelites in the wilderness, and which is evidently referred to in the Song of Deborah, and in the Psalms. Judges v. 4; Psalm lxxviii. 8.\*

2. Antipædobaptists have placed the greatest dependence upon the baptism of John, as furnishing the strongest proof of immersion: we shall, therefore, examine it as fully as our limits permit. They consider immersion established by John's baptizing at "*the Jordan, and Enon, where there was much water*." 1. John's baptizing at either the Jordan or Enon proves nothing with respect to immersion, because it was impossible for him to have baptized such vast multitudes in so short a time, either by sprinkling or pouring, in any other but such a situation; or for such multitudes to have subsisted, with

---

\* Antipædobaptists sometimes ask, if pouring or sprinkling be the mode intended, why *raino*, or *rantizo*, is not used? In reply to this question, it is sufficient to ask, if a total immersion was designed, why was not *buthizo*, *duno*, *dupto*, *epiklizo*, *pontizo*, or *kataduno* employed? Each of these terms signifies *submerston*, or a *total dipping*, and excludes pouring and sprinkling altogether.

their numerous cattle, in such a country as Palestine, during the time they attended his ministry. 2. Its being said that the Saviour was baptized in the Jordan, or his "coming up out of the water," is nothing to the purpose; as the Greek prepositions merely signify *at* or *with* the Jordan, and coming *from* the water. They are so translated *many hundreds* of times in the New Testament, consequently they afford no evidence at all for *dipping*. Learned men have proved this beyond *denial*. 3. John, being a priest, had learned the *ONLY* mode of baptism practised in the Jewish worship, which was by *sprinkling*. He must, *of necessity*, have PRACTISED the only mode of baptism *known* to him: he must, therefore, have SPRINKLED, and *not* immersed, those whom he baptized. 4. It is also an important fact that the *concurring* testimony of travellers of undoubted veracity, prove the Jordan, even at what has been called the baptizing spot, to have been far too *deep* and *rapid*, and its banks too *precipitous*, to admit of such vast multitudes being immersed. It is very easy for Antipædobaptists to beg the question, by *assuming* instead of *proving* immersion; and to say that they *know* that it was so; and that John plunged at the regular ford, where the water deepened gradually, and where, consequently, it might have been practicable for a small number to have been dipped. But this is a mere *evasion*, and leaves the case as it found it; for John "came into all the country about Jordan,"—Luke iii. 3,—preaching and baptizing immense numbers wherever he travelled throughout that whole region. If we make large deductions, and suppose only a length of forty or fifty miles of the Jordan was included, how could *several hundreds of thousands* of men and women be plunged entirely over head in a river from six to nine feet deep at the edges, close to abrupt and precipitous banks, and so rapid that a man could not swim across, it being still deeper toward the middle? 5. With respect to Enon, all the preceding observations apply, except the last. John could not have removed to that place for a greater quantity of water,

(there was much more of that element in the Jordan,) but simply because it was a very populous district, and that the inhabitants might attend his ministry and baptism more conveniently than by going to the river. Whether a spring or a fountain is intended it is difficult to say. All that can now be found is a *well*, which supplies the inhabitants of the neighbouring village. Most likely there was a spring, or springs, which produced several streams or rivulets. If we were to grant that it was "a cavernous spring," so zealously contended for by our opponents, still it would afford them no help—for this reason, that to immerse such vast multitudes in it was not possible. 6. We will now prove that John did *not* baptize by *immersion*, because, in his case, it was an absolute PHYSICAL *impossibility*. John and our Lord having commenced their public ministry at the same age, *viz.* thirty years, and John's ending when our Lord's began, it could only have continued *six months*, because he was only six months older than the Saviour. It is expressly said that the inhabitants of "Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region around about Jordan, were baptized by him," *before* our Lord applied for the rite. Matt. iii. 4, 5, &c. Now, it appears from Josephus that they could not be less than *two millions*. To have baptized *such* a number in six months, by *sprinkling* or *pouring* water upon them, was possible—facts on record prove this—but to have immersed them was a PHYSICAL *impossibility*. Without any time for travelling, rest, or food, "he must have stood up to the middle in water for *six months, from morning till night*, and must have plunged over head and pulled up again 12,800 every day, Sabbaths excepted—about 1070 every hour, and nearly 18 every minute." If an Antipædobaptist should say that the words of the Evangelist are not to be understood *literally*, and that the *whole* adult population was not baptized, it would be very moderate to take *one-half*. This would be really a very mild interpretation of expressions which are so comprehensive; but still this would be *utterly* impossible! Well, then, let us take *one-tenth*

This must be greatly below the reality. But, even then, "John must have stood in the water drring twelve hours *every day*, except Sabbaths, for *six months*, and have dipped entirely over head and pulled up again 1280 *every day*, about 107 *every hour*, and nearly *two every minute*. His garments must have *rotted*, his skin and flesh have *peeled* from his bones," and he must have died long before.

3. The practice of our Lord and his disciples entirely overthrows the *mode* for which our opponents contend. Whether Jesus personally baptized or not is of no importance, because his disciples must have had his immediate authority for their mode of administration. And although they baptized a greater number even than John, we never read of their baptizing either in the Jordan, or at Enon, or any other place where there was much water; but they administered the rite in cities or villages, town or country, wherever they went preaching the kingdom of God, and the people were willing to receive it. Antipædobaptists first *imagine* that John practised immersion, and then, adopting the tone of triumph, say, that having proved one instance of immersion, they have proved immersion in all other cases, because the administration must have been uniform. I am, therefore, justified in saying, that having *demonstrated* that John did not *plunge* "all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Judea, and the region round about Jordan," in that deep and dangerous river, or *anywhere else*, I have effectually *disproved* immersion in every other case.\*

---

\* Some writers of Antipædobaptist tracts have dishonestly quoted Mr. Wesley's name as supporting their scheme. That Mr. Wesley, as well as others, spoke too favourably of immersion, which was introduced in the third, and the latter end of the second century, is granted; and also that he admitted, what none deny, *viz.* that immersion is one of the various meanings of Baptizo, as well as pouring and sprinkling. But, before this can bolster up the cause of our opponents, they must prove *one* of two things:—either first, that Baptizo means immersion *only*, or second, that in every place where it occurs, in the New Testament, it is used to signify a total dipping; and further still, that it is used by our Lord and his apostles to express the twold action of one person dipping *another* entirely over the head, and

4. John's baptism having failed them, it is certain that immersion cannot be proved from any other fact in the New Testament. The APOSTOLIC baptisms, as well as those of the Saviour and his immediate disciples, are entirely against it. It is impossible for the THREE

raising *him* or *her* up again, and that, too, as an appointed rite of sacramental purification. For if it be used at all for *pouring* or *sprinkling*, or even for a *partial* immersion, *then* there is a complete end to the dipping scheme. Our opponents have not yet been able to prove either of the above alternatives, and I confidently predict that they never will. On the contrary, it is demonstrated that the New Testament baptisms were not, and could not be, by immersion, but by pouring or sprinkling only. As one proof of the disgraceful frauds practised by our opponents on the supposed credulity of their readers, and of the degree of confidence which ought to be placed in their statements, I add the following note of Mr. Wesley on Matt. iii. 6:—“Such prodigious numbers could hardly be baptized by immersing their whole bodies under water; nor can we think that they were provided with change of raiment for it, which was scarce practicable for such vast multitudes. And yet they could not be immersed naked with modesty, nor in their wearing apparel with safety. It seems, therefore, that they stood in ranks on the edge of the river, and that John, passing along before them, cast water on their heads, or faces; by which means he might baptize many thousands in a day. And this way most naturally signified Christ's baptizing them ‘with the Holy Ghost and with fire,’ which John spoke of as prefigured by his baptizing with water; and which was eminently fulfilled when the Holy Ghost sat upon the disciples in the appearance of tongues, or flames of fire.”

“Were the people *dipped* or *sprinkled*? For it is certain that *bapto* and *baptizo* mean both. They were all *dipped*, say some. Can any man suppose that it was possible for John to dip *all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judea, and of all the country round about Jordan*? Were both men and women dipped, for certainly both men and women came to his baptism? This could never have comported either with safety or with *decency*. Were they dipped in their clothes? This would have endangered their lives, if they had not with them *change* of raiment; and as such a baptism as John's (however administered) was, in several respects, a *new* thing in Judea, it is not at all likely that the people would come thus provided. But suppose these were *dipped*, which I think it would be impossible to prove, does it follow, that, in all regions of the world, men and women must be *dipped*, in order to be evangelically baptized? In the Eastern countries, *bathings* were frequent, because of the heat of the climate, it being there so necessary to *cleanliness* and *health*; but could our climate, or a more *northerly* one, admit of this with safety for at least three-fourths of the year? We may rest assured that it could not.”—*Dr. Clarke on Matt. iii. 6.*

THOUSAND baptized on the day of Pentecost to have been immersed, for the following reasons :—1. There was no river in which to plunge them : the small brook Kedron was probably dry, or nearly so, at that season of the year,—if full, it was unfit for baptismal purposes, being black and filthy. 2. If there had been a suitable river, the apostles would not have attempted, nor would they have been permitted, to take Jewish females into their arms at all, much less to have perpetrated the gross and outrageous indecency of plunging 3000, both men and women, in a river, and pulling them up again. 3. As they could have had no previous intimation, they could not have been provided with bathing dresses ; and it would have afforded a strange sight to the proud and bigoted scribes and Pharisees, and have been an *odd* way of seeking *their* CONVERSION, to have sent THREE THOUSAND persons, rich and poor, young and old, male and female, home through the streets of Jerusalem, dripping in their wet clothes fresh out of the water. 4. If it be said that there were sufficient baths in the city, it might be granted without assisting their case at all : because, first, if they had gone to them for that purpose, it would most certainly have been recorded ; secondly, baths were constructed for *privacy*, and the apostles would not have been permitted to enter them with females ; and thirdly, if they had, the Jews, who were excessively jealous, and who put away their wives for causes of a trifling nature, would certainly have greeted them with a divorce on their return home. 5. The Jews carried their sentiments of female delicacy and honour even further than we do ; and had the apostles attempted to introduce the new religion by thus outraging all their prevailing notions on that subject, their success had been impossible. And we know that the apostle Paul carried his views so far, that he would not permit women to be unvailed even in the assemblies for divine worship. 6. The only remaining supposition is, that they were either baptized in a state of nudity, (which was impossible,) or else they must have run home for a second suit to be baptized in. In this



case, either in the pool of Bethesda, (as immersionists have supposed,) or some other place, they must have been *twice* exposed in their unclothed condition, men and women together, which is utterly *incredible*. Then they must have rolled up THREE THOUSAND wet suits of clothes, and carried them home to dry. Was ever such a scene imagined by any SANE person? And all this, too, in a crowded metropolis like Jerusalem! Further still, that this most EXTRAORDINARY, *most* UNPARALLELED transaction should have been perpetrated as a RELIGIOUS, a DEVOTIONAL, nay, *more*, a SACRAMENTAL act! That these THREE THOUSAND, therefore, were on the day of PENTECOST baptized by *affusion*, and NOT by *immersion*, I consider to be as certain as that Christianity is TRUE, and as that *common sense* and *decency* exist among mankind.

5. The Ethiopian eunuch is a case on which our opponents lay great stress. It is the only instance of Christian baptism in which there is, even according to the English version, the slightest appearance of being IN the water at all. But if we were to admit them to have been in the water, that would be no proof of immersion. Immersionists themselves admit that a person may be up to the knees, or to the neck in water, and still not be baptized. But I do not hesitate to express my conviction that neither Philip nor the eunuch was ever in the water at all. There is certainly no evidence of it in the text. If our opponents assert the contrary, let them prove it. We have already remarked that there is nothing in the Greek prepositions to prove it: they simply express *going to* and *coming from* the water. Thus the LXX. say, Isaiah xxxvi. 2—"The King sent Rabshakeh from Lachish (*eis*) to Jerusalem;" certainly not *into* it, for the city was not taken. "The sons of the prophets came to Jordan to cut wood:" 2 Kings vi. 4: they did not go *into* the water to perform that work. Peter was bid to go "to the sea, and cast a hook," surely not *into* it. And our Lord "went up to a mountain," Matt. v. 1, but not *into* it. In all those places the same word is used.

Observe further, that the place was "a DESERT." It is a geographical fact that there is no river or lake now, and could be none then. Jerome, who lived many years in that neighbourhood, and knew the spot well, calls it a small brook such as we often cross on a common road. The expressions indicate surprise—"See! water!"—and show clearly that they arrived at it without any previous expectation. Whether it was a small brook, according to Jerome, or a well with a trough, to prevent travellers perishing while passing through such a dry and parched desert, the eunuch could only have been baptized by *sprinkling* or *pouring* some of the water upon him. Such a *mode* of purification he would naturally expect, because it would be familiar to him as a Jewish proselyte, and had probably been suggested to him, and led him immediately to ask for baptism, by the words he had been reading—"He shall *sprinkle* many nations." Isa. lii. 15. Whereas the action of one man putting another under water, was a thing he had never before seen or heard of, and what he was not therefore likely to solicit.

6. That the Samaritans were not baptized by immersion is certain. There is not the least intimation of their having left the city for the purpose of administering the rite, and there exists neither proof nor probability that there was any place within it suitable for immersion. And even supposing it possible that there might have been such a place, Philip would not have attempted, nor, if he had, would he have been permitted to immerse all "the people, both men and women, who with one accord gave heed to the things which he spake," any more than the apostles would the three thousand at Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost. The same argument concludes irresistibly against immersion in both cases.

7. The baptism of Paul is another instance. Ananias addressing him said, "Arise,"—not *Go away*, but *ARISE*—that is, *STAND UP*, and be "baptized" *there* and *then*. This act is called "washing away his sins." Nobody will deny that it was a *ceremonial* washing away of sins, and that it could be no other. Now that was always done

by *sprinkling* the penitent with blood or water. As there is not the slightest evidence in favour of immersion, we may add, that it would have been *monstrous* needlessly to have plunged him under cold water, when weak and exhausted with three days' fasting and mental anguish.

8. The case of the Philippian jailer is entirely *against* our opponents. For how could he and all his household be plunged over head in the *prison*? I know that one immersionist has *supposed* a bath in the jail, and another that they went to a neighbouring river. But both suppositions are entirely *gratuitous*, and without countenance from the text. Were it possible for such *groundless*, unsupported suppositions to *prove* any thing, then it would be easy to prove the wildest absurdity to be true that ever existed, even Mormonism, spirit-rappings, OR ANY THING ELSE. And while mere unauthorized *supposition* can afford no evidence in any case, least of all can it be admitted with our opponents, who require, from all others, *positive proof* for their entire practice. Nothing but the agony of DESPERATION, arising from the absolute necessities of their case, could have induced respectable men to countenance the monstrous notion that the jailer's family were called from their beds, and plunged into a cold-bath; or, what is still more EXTRAVAGANT, taken out at MIDNIGHT, with change of clothing, to be immersed in a river. Having demonstrated that the 3000 were not immersed on the day of Pentecost, no unprejudiced person can believe, and that too without the slightest proof, that the jailer and his family were plunged over head and ears in a river at *midnight*.

9. The only remaining instance in the New Testament in which the circumstances of baptism are more or less narrated, is that of Cornelius and his friends. Acts x. 47. Mark the Apostle's words:—"Can any man forbid *water*, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" The apostle did not ask, Can any man forbid any, or all of us, who have heard the word, and on whom the Holy Ghost is fallen, *going to the water*? but, "Can any man forbid *water*?" that is, *forbid*

*water being brought* to us—brought into the room, or house—that they might be baptized *there* and then. The apostle was not so insane as to ask, Can any man forbid a river coming into the house; or an immense bath or tank being carried in, large enough to dip right over head Cornelius with all his near kinsmen and friends? But, “Can any man forbid water” being brought in a vessel, sufficient for the purpose of sprinkling, or pouring, some of the element upon them?

10. The baptism of the HOLY GHOST is itself *alone* absolutely *decisive* on the question of immersion. By his own MODE of administration—in other words, by the Holy Spirit’s MODE of *acting*—he demonstrates what *kind* of action he denominates baptism, and therefore in what sense HE used the term. By the NATURE of his OWN *action*, he interprets the MEANING of his OWN *expression*, and thereby establishes its *true* SACRAMENTAL signification; demonstrates HOW this ordinance was administered in the apostolical churches; and, therefore, on the principles of immersionists themselves, how it OUGHT to be administered in all future times: it proves unanswerably that baptism is *sprinkling*, *pouring*, or *applying* the element to the person, and *not* dipping the person in the element.

“I indeed baptize you with water; but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.” This form of expression occurs no less than six times in the New Testament. See Matt. iii. 11; Mark i. 8; Luke iii. 16; John i. 33; Acts i. 5, xi. 16. Now just apply the language of our opponents to this sacred subject:—“bathed in the Holy Ghost—buried in the Holy Ghost—descending into the Holy Ghost—dipping into the Holy Ghost—entombing, immersing, and interring in the Holy Ghost—planting and plunging in the Holy Ghost;” and if to this you add the corresponding expressions, “raising, rising, and ascending out of the Holy Ghost,” such language is more to be abhorred for its PROFANENESS than to be ridiculed for its absurdity.

When our blessed Lord received the Holy Ghost, it

descended from heaven and lighted UPON him. It is agreed on all hands, that the apostles were baptized with the HOLY GHOST on the day of Pentecost. And the MODE of spiritual administration is emphatically noted by the apostle Peter on that occasion. "*This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will POUR OUT of my Spirit up on all flesh. And on my servants and on my handmaidens, I will POUR OUT in those days of my Spirit. Having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath SHED FORTH this, which ye now see and hear.*" Acts ii. 16, 18, 33. When Peter and John arrived at Samaria, they "prayed for the disciples, that they might receive the Holy Ghost; for as yet he was FALLEN UPON none of them." Acts viii. 16. While Peter was addressing Cornelius and his friends, "the Holy Ghost FELL ON all them that heard the word. And they of the circumcision were astonished, because that on the Gentiles also was POURED OUT the gift of the HOLY GHOST." Acts x. 44, 45. In explaining this whole transaction to the Apostles and brethren at Jerusalem, Peter remarked, "The Holy Ghost FELL ON them, as ON us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." Acts xi. 15, 16. It is perfectly clear then that the baptism of the Holy Ghost is not a plunging, or dipping; but "*a pouring out,*" a *shedding forth*, a *falling* of the Holy Ghost *upon* the persons baptized. It is equally clear that thus it was understood by Peter. When Paul laid his hands upon the disciples at Ephesus, "the Holy Ghost CAME ON them." Acts xix. 6. The same apostle calls regeneration "*the renewing of the Holy Ghost which he shed, OR POURED OUT, ON us.*" Titus iii. 6.

The only thing worth the least notice which immersionists have to reply is, that on the day of Pentecost "the apostles were surrounded by the Holy Ghost, or as it were drowned or immersed in it." But observe—1. That

this is a mistake. The text does not represent the Holy Spirit as filling the house, but the sound which accompanied it. "And suddenly there came a SOUND from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and IT filled all the house where they were sitting." The SOUND filled the house, and was doubtless heard in every part of it; but this is not to be confounded with the "cloven tongues," nor with "the Holy Spirit," mentioned in the following verses:—"THEY were all filled with the Holy Ghost." The sound filled the *place*, the Spirit filled the *persons*. The sound was WITHOUT, the Spirit WITHIN them.

2. There is a second reply still more fatal to our opponents. The Holy Spirit "came from heaven," — came down from above, descended upon them. They were not plunged into it, for it fell UPON them. The whole question at issue refers to the *action* or *mode* of baptism: the quantity of the element can have nothing to do in solving it. Nor would they so often refer to it, if they were not set completely fast as to the real point under consideration.

3. Once more, the disciples were "baptized with the Holy Ghost," as they were "with fire." Matt. iii. 11; Luke iii. 16. What was the action here? Were they immersed, plunged, or dipped into the fire? No: "there appeared unto them cloven tongues as of fire," (like a bishop's mitre,) "and it SAT UPON each of them." Acts ii. 3.

4. The baptismal element was ACTIVE, the subjects were *passive*. It came UPON *them*, they were not *plunged* into it.

5. "Baptism was intended to teach the communication of the Holy Spirit's influence from heaven above upon the souls of unconverted and un-sanctified men. Pouring, or sprinkling, only can properly answer this purpose. Dipping teaches another and an opposite doctrine; namely, that in the conversion and regeneration of fallen men—men 'spiritually blind and dead, and enemies to God by wicked works,'—they make the first effectual move toward salvation, while the Holy Spirit makes none at all toward them—the quiescent waters in the baptistry plainly representing divine influence, to which the unawakened and graceless soul first

applies to obtain light, faith, love, hope, and all other spiritual benefits! How any person believing in the dreadful depravity of human nature, and the necessity of divine grace FIRST to quicken and arouse the sinner, can advocate immersion baptism, which teaches a directly contrary doctrine, surpasses all ordinary comprehension." This conclusive argument, I believe, admits of no reply. It necessarily follows that our MODE of administration cannot but be RIGHT, for it is GOD'S OWN MODE: for the same reason, *immersion*, or dipping, *cannot* but be WRONG, for it is the directly OPPOSITE. The Holy Ghost baptizes by "*falling upon*," by "*shedding forth*," "*pouring out*" his influences *upon* the subjects of his baptism; therefore, the SHEDDING FORTH, the POURING OUT, the SPRINKLING, or FALLING of water UPON the person, is the TRUE SCRIPTURAL baptism. If then our opponents be right, in asserting that ONE mode only is lawful, then it is clear that dipping the person in the water is NOT Christian baptism—it is not a divine ordinance AT ALL, but will-worship only, a mere human invention, a *corrupt, useless, and mischievous* device of *man*, substituted for the ordinance of God.

11. We will now take a brief notice of several scripture allusions. The zeal of immersionists having fallen into the error of putting fancy in the place of discrimination, and having committed the cause of dipping to the guidance of a lively and willing imagination instead of a sober and intelligent judgment, suppose themselves to have found their favourite mode in 1 Peter iii. 20, 21, where the apostle alludes to Noah and his family being saved in the ark. But here again the fact is directly opposed to their scheme; for it is certain that the ark was never immersed in the waters of the deluge—the rain descending, was sprinkled or poured upon it from above. And when the "fountains of the great deep were broken up," and the rising deluge lifted up the ark from the earth, only the keel and part of the bottom were ever in the water at all. The ark was never submerged, or dipped under the flood. And as for Noah and his family,

they were never touched either by the descending rain from above, or the rising flood beneath them. 2. Our Lord's sufferings are alluded to, Matt. xx. 22, 23. But he was not plunged into his own blood, but sprinkled with it; or it was poured upon some parts of his body as it flowed from the nail prints in his hands and feet, and the wound in his side from the Roman spear. Here again our opponents, in the indulgence of an excited and rampant imagination, fancy that they can create immersion on the top of the rocky mount of Calvary, and out of the very wood which formed the Saviour's cross. And how is this singularly clever operation performed? Why, by telling "the simple ones who love simplicity," that "Jesus here refers to those waters of divine justice into which he was soon to sink for man's redemption." Here are waters again! Nothing but water! It rises in their sleeping and waking dreams. But oh, it was a more solemn baptism than of water—it was a baptism of blood! Nor is such an image as "waters of divine justice" ever employed in Holy Scripture to represent the Saviour's vicarious sufferings. Unfortunately, too, for these conceits, our Lord declared to Zebedee's children, that "they should drink of his cup, and be baptized with his baptism." Were James and John also "to sink into the waters of divine justice for man's redemption?" Even the zeal of Antipædobaptists will not assert this! No; but James and John were to suffer for the sake of being instrumental in the world's conversion, as apostles or missionaries; and in that sense were baptized with his baptism who suffered the death of the cross for its redemption. "Jehovah laid ON Him the iniquity of us all."—Isa. liii.

6. 3. The only remaining allusion upon which our opponents place reliance, is Rom. vi. 3-6; Col. ii. 10-13. (1.) The apostle cannot here allude to immersion, because we have effectually demonstrated that neither John the Baptist, nor our Lord, nor the apostles themselves, ever dipped those to whom they administered the ordinance. It is impossible, therefore, that he should allude to what had no existence. (2.) There is no REAL, but only a



fancied resemblance between a momentary dipping under water and instant raising out again, and a real death, burial, and resurrection. (3.) There cannot be any allusion to our mode of burial, for it was not known to the apostle. If it had, the body is not dipped into the element that covers it: the earth is thrown, or *poured* upon it. Immersion furnishes no allusion to the most ancient mode of raising tumuli or mounds over the dead; for the earth was cast upon them till it became a considerable hillock, and there it remained. It affords none to the Roman practice which prevailed at that time, of burning the body and depositing the ashes in an urn. And finally, it has none to the death and burial of our blessed Saviour. Our Lord's body was **CARRIED** to the tomb—was deposited in a chamber hewn in the **SIDE** of a rock, being laid on the floor or upon a side bench, a great stone was then rolled against the entrance; and there the body remained two nights and part of three days. Whereas when an ordinary submersion baptism takes place, the person is not carried, but walks himself into the water, perhaps up to the middle, or higher: the minister then puts his head and shoulders under water for the shortest possible time, instantly raising him up again, and then walks away to change his clothes. Who, but persons blinded by a system, and determined to maintain it at all events, could even fancy a resemblance between the ceremonies which do not present one single point of fair analogy? (4.) The fact is, the apostle's analogy is not between baptism and the Saviour's burial and resurrection, but between our Lord's **CRUCIFIXION**, **BURIAL**, and **RESURRECTION**—and the believer's being **CRUCIFIED** and **DYING** to sin, and **RIISING** to a new and spiritual life; as the whole passage, with many others, sufficiently prove. Baptism is referred to as the public profession of their faith in him, and the seal of their covenant and vital union with him. They were "baptized into Christ," into the faith of his doctrine, and especially of his crucifixion as the great atonement—by or through which they are become "dead indeed unto sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord"—Ver.

11. (5.) We may add that to read the passage in the only way which would agree with immersion, would turn the whole into gross and insufferable absurdity. For instance, "plunged into Christ, dipped into Christ," etc.—"dipped, plunged, immersed into his death—buried with him by dipping into death—buried with him by plunging into death," etc. (6.) In the very same connection, also, the apostle speaks of our being "circumcised with the circumcision of Christ—crucified with Christ—and planted together in the likeness of his death." Why are all these expressions generally overlooked? I know indeed that some immersionists have claimed the last as teaching their view—but still most absurdly—there being the most essential difference between plunging or immersion and planting or grafting: as in the former, the whole body is put under the water, and in the latter a very small part of the tree *only* is put into the ground; or if the branch be grafted into another stock, a very trifling part only is inserted into it. Still, therefore, *immersion* meets with no support or countenance.

12. I might here insist upon the *indecent* of immersion, but shall only remark that as female delicacy cannot be effectually protected by all the modern contrivances of dresses with lead sewed into the bottom, etc.; and, as no such precautions existed in the cases mentioned in the New Testament, it is utterly *incredible* that such a mode should ever have entered into the head of an apostle, or have been submitted to by Jewish females, or their family connections. It had never been required by ceremonial purifications, or baptisms, under the law; and it was impossible for such a monstrous and indecent innovation to have commenced on the day of Pentecost, with a promiscuous multitude of three thousand out of all the various countries mentioned.

13. Did our limits permit, we might enlarge upon the impossibility of that *mode* being divinely appointed, and therefore essential to one of the two sacraments of the Christian church, and consequently OBLIGATORY upon ALL Christians, which is literally and *physically* impracticable

in many parts of the world during a great part of the year; and if it were practicable, would, in many cases, occasion the inevitable destruction of HEALTH, and even of LIFE. Too many cases of death, as having resulted from immersion, have been authenticated. (See Thorn's "Modern Immersion not Scripture Baptism.")

14. Antipædobaptists often lay great stress upon the antiquity of immersion. We must therefore bestow a few words upon this part of the subject. 1. If a practice *cannot* be proved from the New Testament, it can have no authority. It is not BINDING upon Christians. 2. Immersion can be traced up to the THIRD and latter end of the SECOND century, to the times of Tertullian and Cyprian, when the church began to be inundated by a great variety of superstitious usages, which ripened up into full grown Popery. The editor of Calmet, and others, have produced strong evidence to prove that it was only adopted as a preliminary rite, and that baptism even then was performed by sprinkling. That *immersion* was itself one of those corruptions of the scriptural ordinance which was introduced under the notion of making baptism more emblematical and impressive to the senses, just on the same ground as all the other superstitions of Popery, appears from its connection with *baptismal* regeneration, and with a great number of silly, superstitious, and disgusting usages, *viz.*, blessing and exorcising the water to drive the devils out—rubbing the candidates all over with oil—dipping them naked—dipping them three times—turning their faces toward the East—the priest touching their mouth and ears with spittle, also blowing and spitting in their faces—giving them milk, honey, and salt to eat—abstaining from certain kinds of food for forty days previously—and the putting on of white garments subsequently. Robinson, the Antipædobaptist historian and apologist says, "Let it be observed that the primitive (ancient) Christians baptized naked. There is no ancient historical fact better authenticated than this." St. Chrysostom, speaking of baptism, says, "Men were as naked as Adam in Paradise; but with this difference—Adam was

naked because he had sinned, but in baptism a man was naked that he might be freed from sin." St. Ambrose says, "Men came as naked to the font as they came into the world;" and thence he draws an argument, by way of allusion to rich men, telling them how absurd it was that a man who was born naked of his mother, and received naked by the church, should think of going rich into heaven." They thought, rationally enough, that if dipping was used at all, the body should be washed, and not the garments. I should like to know the *antiquity* of dipping people in their clothes! *Such antiquity* as our opponents can adduce is worth little indeed! But before they can consistently plead even THAT in their favour, they must dip people "as naked as they came into the world." Yes, young men and maidens, old men and children can only be allowed their birthday suit! And to this they must add EXORCISM, OIL, CROSSINGS, TRINE IMMERSION, SPITTLE, MILK, HONEY, SALT, *etc. etc.* Till they do ALL this, there is an end even of antiquity as an authority for their practice.

I have nearly arrived at the utmost limit I have prescribed to myself, and therefore can only add:—1. That the preceding facts explain the reason of so many ancient and some modern churches favouring immersion as *one* mode of baptism. This corruption, like others, being once introduced, continued and spread from one to another. The Greek church itself, with trine immersion and sprinkling, has dangerous and superstitious corruptions and errors almost without end. 2. The practice of our opponents so frequently quoting the admissions and concessions of Pædobaptists, can answer no purpose but of misleading their readers. Many respectable individuals, instead of thoroughly examining the subject for themselves, have been influenced by a too superstitious deference to antiquity. And yet, in this case, when UNDERSTOOD, how little is it worth! 3. From the preceding adduction of undeniable Scripture facts, it follows, (1.) That the ENTIRE SYSTEM of the Antipædobaptists is not only *without* scriptural authority, but in direct opposition to it. (2.)

That adult proselytes and children are the proper subjects of this rite. (3.) That BAPTISM is the application of the element by SPRINKLING or POURING it upon the subject. 4. That all who have been thus baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity have duly and properly received the Christian ordinance; and as baptism is the rite of initiation into Christ's church, and to be received ONCE *only*, a pretended repetition of it, by dipping, or any other mode, is an UNAUTHORIZED PROFANATION of CHRIST'S ORDINANCE. And for any person to disturb and pervert the minds or interrupt the peace of other Christians, or churches, on any such ground, is anti-Christian and mischievous.

If any person, capable of forming an impartial judgment, should think I have expressed myself strongly, let the following things be kept in mind:—1. I have not expressed, nor am I conscious of one unkind feeling toward Immersionists themselves. 2. I feel strongly the TRUTH of what I have written. 3. Our opponents are in the habit of asserting, not only that we are entirely wrong, but also that we corrupt the ordinance of Christ—that we are not baptized at all—that infants sprinkling is mere will-worship, *etc. etc.* 4. I have made no assertions that cannot be sustained by irrefragable arguments. These, I hope, have been furnished, both in number and weight, sufficient to satisfy every candid and unprejudiced reader. Those who wish an extended discussion of the whole subject, may find it in a Treatise on Baptism, published by JOHN EARLY for the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

## RITE OF CONFIRMATION TESTED.

---

BY LEROY M. LEE, D. D.

---

THE great prominence given to the ceremony of Confirmation by Protestant Episcopal writers, and the strenuous efforts put forth to increase the number of its subjects, render it a duty to examine the grounds upon which it rests as an institute and is urged as a religious obligation. In doing this, it will not be necessary to speak much of the *sacrament* of Confirmation as held by Papists and others, for if the *rite* as practised by the Anglican and Anglo-American churches shall be found untenable, the *sacrament* may as well be left out of the argument. In examining the claims set up for the rite of confirmation, we shall first inquire into its scriptural authority.

### IS CONFIRMATION A DIVINELY INSTITUTED ORDINANCE OF RELIGION?

The Rev. J. A. Clark says, it concerns a Christian in the same way that "repentance, faith, and baptism" concern him. It is clear that these are positive duties of the gospel, made so by special commandment; and if confirmation concern us in an equal degree, it must be because its authority rests upon the same broad foundation. But can this be shown? The Scriptures are replete with information respecting the duties of repentance, faith, and baptism. And yet not a passage can be produced that

defines confirmation as a ceremony, or prescribes it as a duty. With what propriety, then, can it be asserted to possess equal weight as an obligation of religion, if not equal worth as an institution of the gospel, with the fundamental principles and requirements just enumerated?

But among the most strenuous advocates of the rite, it is not even pretended to be a positive institution of the gospel. Bishop Meade says, "We do not mean to say that this rite is appointed in the Scriptures as clearly as the others, (baptism and the Lord's supper,) but that we have the same proofs of its observance in the ages immediately succeeding that of the apostles."\* And Mr. Clark only supposes it to rest for authority upon the practice of the apostles. He says, "Let us then attend to the recorded history of their acts, and see whether we are warranted to conclude that the rite of confirmation is of apostolic origin."† Neither of these writers claims for confirmation a positive divine institution—at least, not in words. The object of the argument, however, is to establish divine authority for the rite. To effect this, one sends us to "the age succeeding that of the apostles;" and the other, to "the recorded history of their acts." It will be readily admitted, that the apostles were "empowered to settle and arrange every thing connected with the spiritual well-being of the church." And for this purpose they were endowed with the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. But still it does not follow that they created any new ceremonies of religion. They left the institutions of the church, in nature and number, precisely as they were established by Christ. The ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper had been instituted by Christ—the one the sacrament of admission to the Christian covenant—the other designed to preserve and perpetuate the remembrance of the gracious atonement by which that covenant is confirmed. These were deemed sufficient by the blessed Redeemer; and there was no need to add

---

\* Sermon on Confirmation, p. 15, ed. 1833.

† The Pastor's Testimony, p. 46.

to the number, even granting that the apostles had the authority to alter or increase the conditions and obligations of the gospel. And, therefore, the opinion that the apostles superadded the intermediate rite of confirmation as a seal of baptism, and a preparation for admission to the holy communion, can only be justified upon the supposition of the defective organization of the church as established by Christ.

Although it is conceded by these writers, that confirmation is not positively enacted as a religious institute, it is nevertheless the obvious intention of their arguments to make the impression that the rite does possess full religious authority. Confirmation is assumed to be a divinely instituted ordinance; and the assumption is attempted to be proved by showing a similitude between the ceremony as held and practised by the church, and certain actions performed on two occasions by the apostles. These actions, with their supposed bearings upon the rite of confirmation, will be examined in their proper place, when we shall be greatly disappointed if we do not show an utter disagreement between them in every essential particular. In the mean time, as *one* passage of Scripture—but *one*!—is relied on for proof of divine authority for the rite, it is important to a correct and satisfactory decision of the subject to give it a just and impartial examination. Of this passage, as furnishing the scriptural foundation of the rite, Dr. Chapman uses the following language: "I know of but one passage where it is specifically spoken of in the abstract, or disconnected with its commemoration. But then so clearly and distinctly, that he who runs may read and understand."\* The passage "so clearly and distinctly" establishing the rite of confirmation, is the following: "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection: not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of *laying on of hands*, and of resurrection

---

\* Sermons upon the Ministry, &c., pp. 137, 138.



of the dead, and of eternal judgment.”\* The argument from this text is presented in two forms. It is argued that “laying on of hands” is one of “the leading articles of the Christian faith;” and then assumed that this act of imposition is confirmation. Now, to say nothing of the extreme singularity of the opinion that a mere ceremony is a leading article of the Christian *faith*, there is no real connection between these positions. For even granting that laying on of hands is one of the fundamental principles of religion, it will not follow that the rite of confirmation is involved in the act. But it is denied that imposition of hands constitutes a fundamental principle of religion. St. Paul does not authorize such an opinion. The context shows that, at the most, it can only be regarded as an elementary truth. The exhortation of the text was addressed to such as had need still to be taught “the first principles of the oracles of God;” and it was designed to hasten them on to the holier and more elevated employments of religion,—to deter them from loitering around the simple elementary truths of the gospel. These first principles were to be left—perfection was to be sought.

It is insisted, however, that the text teaches the “laying on of hands,” and therefore “clearly and distinctly” authorizes confirmation. But this is still a mere assumption, against which several weighty objections may be urged. As *first*, the apostle gives no specific application to the term in the text. It is used in a general sense, in connection with various other expressions of general import. It is, therefore, contrary to all just rules of interpretation to restrict it to a particular subject. Again: it is conceded by the advocates of confirmation that, unless the passage before us may be so construed, the Scriptures do not contain, even “in the abstract,” a solitary allusion to the rite of confirmation. And,

---

\* Heb. vi. 1, 2. Bishop Meade and Mr. Clark both quote this passage in proof of the same position. The latter considers it also as involving the perpetuity of the rite, both as an institute of the gospel and a Christian obligation.

*lastly*, that as the "laying on of hands" was common among the apostles, and for specific purposes, such as, in ordaining to the ministry,\* in healing the sick,† restoring the blind,‡ and for conveying the miraculous gifts of the Spirit,§ it is exceedingly unwarrantable to overlook the recorded instances of imposition for authorized purposes, and restrict the meaning of the text to a ceremony which, in the judgment of its warmest advocates, is without direct scriptural authority. In no instance is confirmation as a religious rite even alluded to, and the passage before us is certainly of very obscure signification: it argues, therefore, to say the least, a very loose mode of reasoning to apply an isolated passage of Scripture, having no obvious connection with any settled principle or fact of religion, to the establishment of the divine authority of confirmation. There is certainly just as much to authorize the application of the text to any of the forms of imposition enumerated above, as there is to the rite of confirmation. Indeed more so, for each of these forms is "clearly and distinctly" mentioned in Scripture, and the apostle may have had one of them in view. But, with respect to confirmation, there is not, in fact, the remotest probability that such a ceremony entered into the conceptions of St. Paul. Now, if there be any just ground of doubt against the application of this expression to confirmation, it will follow that the rite, so far from being "clearly and distinctly" defined, is not even recognised by the apostle as among the institutions of the gospel.

Again, the application of this passage of Scripture to the rite of confirmation, is argued from the fact of its connection with "the doctrine of baptisms." Or, as Dr. Chapman supposes, because in the enumeration of the apostle, the "laying on of hands" is placed between baptism and the resurrection of the dead, and in connection with repentance and faith, and eternal judgment, it is, "by

---

\* Acts v. 6.

† Acts ix. 12, 17.

‡ Mark xvi. 15.

§ Acts viii. 14-19; xix. 1-7.

the rule of analogy, a doctrine of equal obligation and extent. For no other reason was it classed with principles constituting the basis of our religion; for no other reason was it enumerated immediately after baptism, but to show its proper place in the order of events. As faith follows repentance, and an eternal judgment the resurrection of the dead—so does, and should, the laying on of hands succeed to the reception of baptism.”\* The doctor is very positive; but whether he correctly interprets the apostle, is altogether another question. And before it can be decided in the affirmative, it must be proved that the apostle *intended* to connect the “laying on of hands” with baptism as Dr. Chapman understands and teaches; and then, that imposition of hands in the text exclusively defines the rite of confirmation. But, not to dwell on these continually recurring difficulties to the advocates of confirmation, it is amusing to witness the adroitness with which the utmost in the argument is made of a weak and very singular position. Because, in the enumeration of the apostle, the sentence “of laying on of hands” is placed *between* that of “the doctrine of baptisms,” and the “resurrection of the dead,” it is concluded that imposition of hands is “a doctrine of equal obligation and extent” with every other in the catalogue. And not only so, but that it was actually put in that position “for no other reason but to show that the laying on of hands does, and should, succeed to the reception of baptism.” A simple change in the position of the words, would alter or destroy the whole theory of confirmation. The argument is fanciful: it may be proved to be absurd. It was derived not so much from a sober consideration of the language of St. Paul, as from the preconceived opinions of its author. Its entire structure shows it to be the product of a desire to establish the divine authority of a rite that otherwise must pass for a human addition to the institutions of the glorious gospel. The comment is based upon a misconception of the text of the apostle. Instead of settling

---

\* Sermons on the Ministry, etc., p. 139.

"principles constituting the basis of our religion," St. Paul was striving to lead the mind away from the elementary truths of the gospel. These were no longer subjects of "doubtful disputation." The foundation had been laid, the superstructure was to be raised. They had submitted to the conditions of the gospel, had been admitted to its privileges by baptism, were, *by* "laying on of hands," partakers of the Holy Ghost, and were certified of the "resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment." Having penetrated the Christian temple, they could no longer engage in "laying the foundation of repentance from dead works." This is an easy paraphrase of the text; and although it recognises the gifts of the Holy Ghost as following the imposition of hands, it affords no support to the rite of confirmation, *because* it is not even pretended that these gifts accompany or succeed the celebration of that ceremony. Indeed, it is disallowed by the church, and denied by the writers we are examining. Unless, therefore, it be contended that the gifts of the Spirit do follow the ceremony of confirmation as a direct and uniform effect, it is impossible to derive from the text we are considering the least particle of authority for the rite.

It would be improper, in examining the text of St. Paul, to omit a statement of the fact, that commentators very generally differ with respect to its true meaning. Bishop Meade admits this, and without attempting an explanation, says, "Let those who feel an interest in the subject examine for themselves."\* This is very kind, and exceedingly cautious; and most strikingly contrasts with the confidence of Dr. Chapman. Among several commentators we have examined, we do not find one who supposes it to involve the rite of confirmation. The prevailing opinion seems to be, that by "laying on of hands," is meant, either ordination to the ministry, or the act of the apostles for conveying the gifts of the Spirit—an act only twice mentioned as having been performed; and of which there is not, in Scripture, a sentence to authorize the

---

\* Sermon on Confirmation, p. 17.

belief that it was ever to be repeated, or that it was to be incorporated among the institutions of the church. In addition to this, it may be also stated that the simple language of the text involves a class of difficulties of a singularly unfortunate character for the confident interpretation of Dr. Chapman. Upon his theory, "the *doctrine* of baptisms" must be restricted to the *ceremony* of baptism; and the "divers washings" involved in the plural baptisms, must be narrowed down to the fact of being baptized. It may be justly questioned whether St. Paul intended baptism with water, or with the Holy Ghost—the many baptisms of Judaism, or the one baptism of the Christian covenant; or yet the baptism of John as distinguished from that of Christ, which was a subject of eager controversy during the life of the apostles. Even granting it to mean baptism with water, how does it involve the obligation of a subsequent imposition of hands? Again: with respect to "laying on of hands," who can tell the precise meaning of the apostle? Whether, through the custom of the law of laying the hands on the head of the victim for sacrifice, he alludes to the sacrificial atonement of Christ, which opinion is strengthened by the facts that he was addressing Jews, and that the epistle abounds with such allusions; or whether he meant the mode of conveying the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit to believers in that extraordinary dispensation of miraculous powers; or some one of the other forms of imposition heretofore defined as common among apostles; or whether he intended to comprehend the whole, it is impossible to determine. It is, however, clear that, unless confirmation be involved in one of these, it is not recognised, even "in the abstract," in the sacred canon.

But then, look at its position, exclaims Dr. Chapman, directly between "the doctrine of baptisms" and the "resurrection of the dead;" and placed there "*for no other reason*," but to show its proper place in the order of events." How rash! Bishop Meade concedes the difficulties, and shrinks from contact with them: Dr. Chapman cuts the whole with a single stroke of his pen, and abso-

lutely pronounces the apostle to have had but *one* reason for constructing the terms of the text. Once more—the text describes “the *principles* of the doctrines of Christ,” not a consecutive “order of events,” as the writer we are examining supposes—a supposition upon which his whole theory is based. According to Dr. Chapman, the text defines the regular process of Christian life, from repentance to eternal judgment. But is this the proper meaning of St. Paul’s language? By no means. The apostle was announcing “doctrines,” not describing “events:” he was teaching the *first* principles of Christianity, not the regular “order of events” in the Christian life. It must be repeated, doctrines not events filled the apostle’s mind: the doctrine of baptism, the doctrine of laying on of hands, the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, the doctrine of eternal judgment. These, with their holy influences and solemn engagements, formed the subjects of his counsel, the foundation on which he laboured to rear the superstructure of faith and holiness. The cordial reception of these doctrines involved the obligation of going on to perfection; and hence the earnestness with which they were importuned to *leave* them. In Dr. Chapman’s view they would be singly and successively overtaken.

These objections to the application of the passage in question to the support of confirmation are insuperable. They cannot be obviated. The argument that, as “eternal judgment follows the resurrection of the dead, so does, and should, the laying on of hands succeed to the reception of baptism,” is as flimsy as it is fanciful. But it should be credited rather to the exigencies of the subject than to any improper freedom with logic. In closing our remarks on this part of the subject, we cannot forbear to quote the language of a very distinguished clergyman of the Church of England, in corroboration of the opinions we have expressed. He says, “In Hebrews vi. 2, mention is made of ‘the doctrine of laying on of hands,’ immediately after that of ‘the doctrine of baptism;’ but there is nothing in the passage to prove that these two

ceremonies were immediately connected with each other; and many expositors understand this imposition of hands to be that practised in healing the sick, or in ordination to the ministry.\* And yet, in the very face of all this, Dr. Chapman does not scruple to affirm that the text, the only one, according to his own admission, applicable directly to the subject in the Scriptures, defines the rite of confirmation "so clearly and distinctly, that he who runs may read and understand."

Another branch of the argument for the scriptural authority of confirmation, is derived from what its advocates call, the *practice* of the apostles. Mr. Clark says, "We fully believe that this rite originated with the apostles themselves."† And Dr. Chapman affirms "its *repeated* celebration by the apostles."‡ But, after a most patient search, he only adduces *two* instances that by any, even the most tortured construction, can be brought to bear upon the subject.

The first is recorded in Acts viii. 14-17: "Now, when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For, as yet, he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost."

The second is in Acts xix. 5, 6: "When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues and prophesied."

In both of these cases, imposition of hands is distinctly recognised as being conferred upon persons previously baptized. From these two facts, the plea is set up for the divine origin and perpetual authority of the rite of con-

\* Rev. J. E. Riddle, *Manual of Christian Antiquities*, p. 492. [Some prelatical writers think the reference is to the laying on of hands for the restoration of penitents.—Ed.]

† *The Pastor's Testimony*, p. 46.

‡ *Sermon*, p. 137.

firmation. But before either can be established, it must be proved, *first*, that it was intended by these acts of imposition to authorize the ceremony of confirmation; and *secondly*, that it was the usual practice of the apostles to confer imposition of hands upon all who were baptized. Unless both of these positions can be maintained, no authority for the rite of confirmation can be derived from the instances we are considering. Let us examine these points.

*Was it intended by these acts of imposition to authorize the ceremony of confirmation?*

Against the affirmative of this position, several weighty objections may be urged. As *first*, no intention of the kind is expressed in either case. A very different object is distinctly avowed in both. In one case of imposition it was asked, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost, since ye believed?" and the effects following the other, show that the conveyance of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit was the specific intention of both. No other object was sought to be accomplished by the ceremony. *Secondly*, That no ordinary ceremony was performed, or aimed to be established, on either of these occasions, is stamped upon the face of the record. Each possesses all the features of an independent and extraordinary transaction, in which the apostles performed a miracle that none can repeat, and others may not imitate. And *thirdly*, before any plea for the repetition of this ceremony can be properly set up, it must either be divested of all the qualities that constitute it a miraculous transaction, or those claiming to exercise it must exhibit proofs of equal power with the apostles to confer the gifts of the Spirit. Of the latter, Mr. Clark says, "Do not suppose that we mean to teach the *absurd doctrine*, that bishops have the power of conferring the Holy Spirit arbitrarily on whomsoever they please;"\* and so sensible was Bishop Meade of the necessity of the former, that he endeavours to disprove the miraculousness of one of the cases under considera-

---

\* The Pastor's Testimony, p. 52.



tion.\* These are insuperable difficulties in the way of every attempt to trace the authority of confirmation to the practice of the apostles, or to justify the rite as a religious institution, because they conferred the gifts of the Spirit by imposition of hands.

The laying on of hands, as performed by the apostles, was truly extraordinary, as may be gathered from the fact, that only two instances of its administration upon private Christians are recorded, and each of these is marked by features, and followed by effects, that distinguish it as miraculous in its nature, and supernatural in its influence. That this is true of the ceremony, as practised at Ephesus, no reasonable Christian can doubt. For, in the narrative, it is not only affirmed that the ceremony was *intended* to convey to the subjects the Holy Ghost, but that it was actually accompanied by an extraordinary manifestation of supernatural effects: "And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them, *and they spake with tongues and prophesied.*" As there can be no doubt of the miraculousness of the effects of this act, so neither can there be any of the intention of performing it: it was not to establish a religious ceremony, but to convey the Holy Ghost in his munificent and mighty influence: it was not an example for subsequent ages to imitate, but a divinely wrought miracle to establish the truth of the gospel, and fit its subjects for active labour in the church of Christ. If confirmation claims authority from this transaction of the apostle, it must either assume the power to convey the supernatural gifts of the Spirit, or, yielding that, it must prove its right to retain and insist upon submission to a ceremony, the reason for which has long since ceased to exist.

But the transaction at Samaria is supposed to differ from that at Ephesus; and is regarded, at least by Bishop Meade, as sustaining the position, advocated alike by himself, Mr. Clark,† and Dr. Chapman,‡ that confirma-

---

\* Sermon, p. 21.

† The Pastor's Testimony, pp. 61, 62.

‡ Sermons, &c. p. 152.

tion does convey to its recipients the ordinary graces of the Spirit. The bishop says, "And, indeed, even in those few instances which are on record, there is one where nothing is expressly said of miraculous gifts."\* On the same page, he attempts to show, in the face of the inspired narrative, "that Simon *saw* that, through laying on of the apostles' hands, the Holy Ghost *was given*," the probability that the whole affair was, as to its effects, entirely ordinary, or partly ordinary and partly extraordinary. Nothing positively either way, or both so balanced as to justify the rite of confirmation, and its power to convey the ordinary graces of the Spirit. Now, although "nothing is *expressly* said of extraordinary gifts," yet, that the narrative distinctly recognises these gifts, no one will have the temerity to dispute. Even Bishop Meade ingeniously evades a denial: he neither "expressly" denies nor admits the exclusively extraordinary nature of the transaction. But the account does exhibit "clearly and distinctly" the presence and proofs of the miraculous powers of the Spirit. It was these that Simon *saw*. He saw the act of imposition, and, accompanying that, saw "that the Holy Ghost *was given*." He saw not the inward influences upon their feelings, but the outward effects upon their actions. They *said* and *did* what was clearly extraordinary, and certainly miraculous—unlike any thing he had ever seen or heard—and so direct and sensible, that he was convinced of its absolute connection with the laying on of the hands of the apostles. Hence, he concluded them to be indissolubly joined, and "offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost." The effects following this act of imposition were *visible*, such as struck the senses of Simon, and satisfied him of the presence of the extraordinary power of the Holy Ghost; and hence his proffer to purchase the power

---

\* Sermon, p. 21. He speaks of the "*few instances*" in which the ceremony of imposition is recorded in connection with baptism. But *two* such instances are recorded.

to impart the same gifts. The narrative describes a miracle; and it defines the miracle in terms so plain, and so utterly exclusive of every thing ordinary and natural, that it seems impossible not to discover it. Bishop Meade makes a hearty effort to dispossess this account of the gift of the Holy Ghost of its strong supernatural characteristics. He conjectures many things; and concludes with the strange affirmation that "it is impossible for us to arrive at any certainty" with respect to the meaning of the transaction. But this conclusion is less accordant with the inspired narrative, than with the difficulties opposing themselves to the establishment of scriptural authority for the rite of confirmation. These difficulties constitute the real obstacle in the way of a correct understanding of the nature and design of the transaction at Samaria. Despair of finding solid proof to support the claims of confirmation, originated the doubt that almost denies the presence of any thing supernatural and extraordinary in the ceremony of the apostles, and the effects that followed it.

Each of these transactions possesses all the elements, and exhibits all the proofs of a strictly miraculous event. As a miracle, each was intended to prove the truth and power of Christianity; and neither, by any just rule of interpretation, can be regarded as furnishing an example for Christians to follow, or as authorizing a ceremony to be incorporated among the institutions of the gospel. The obligation to imitate the Saviour, in mixing clay and spittle for the blind, or the apostles, in sending aprons and handkerchiefs from their bodies to the sick, is as strong, and may be urged upon grounds quite as good as those on which confirmation is sought to be established.

This brings us to the consideration of the second general question involved in this subject:—

*Was it the usual practice of the apostles to confer imposition of hands upon all who were baptized?*

It is undeniable that, in each of the cases before us, the persons upon whom the apostles laid their hands had

been baptized previous to the act of imposition. This fact is supposed to afford a strong argument in favour of the rite of confirmation. It is asked, with an air of triumph, "Can any narrative be more satisfactory? Both men and women were the subjects of baptism and of the subsequent rite."\* And, therefore, as the argument is made to run, *because* they were baptized, they received the imposition of hands. But this is *not* the doctrine of the narrative. It was because they were destitute of the Holy Ghost that the apostles laid their hands upon them, not because they were baptized. Why then, it may be asked, is their having been baptized so distinctly stated? Doubtless, because it was proper to announce the fact, as there would have been a manifest impropriety in conferring the extraordinary powers of the Holy Ghost upon persons *not* brought into the Christian covenant by baptism. But again, if the apostles laid their hands on these persons *because* they were baptized, it will follow that imposition succeeded baptism as a necessary appendage. The truth of this position is assumed in every argument urged in behalf of confirmation. If the position be true, baptism is imperfect without the subsequent ceremony of imposition. And it will also follow, that the laying on of hands was a common practice with the apostles; otherwise, in every instance of omission, the spiritual interests of the subjects were neglected, and their own essential work imperfectly performed. Upon the ground assumed by the advocates of confirmation, these serious and weighty allegations against the apostles can only be removed by proving as many instances of imposition upon private Christians, as there are cases of baptism recorded to have taken place among them. A majority of examples, at least, must be adduced before any thing in favour of imposition of hands as an appendage to baptism can be established. But, was it the usual practice of the apostles to confer imposition of hands upon those who were baptized? Certainly not. Only two instances of such im-

---

\* Dr. Chapman, Sermons, p. 140.

position are recorded, and these for avowedly miraculous purposes; while the instances of baptism *without* imposition, and baptism, too, by the apostles, are not only numerous in point of fact, but absolutely without a solitary allusion to any "subsequent rite." These two cases of baptism were attended with extraordinary circumstances and effects; and, therefore, in many other histories of baptism during the time of the apostles, no mention whatever is made of a subsequent imposition of hands. Thus, in the history of the baptism of the three thousand men on the day of Pentecost, after the preaching of Peter, although the apostle promised them that they should receive the gift of the Holy Ghost upon their baptism, yet nothing is said respecting any laying on of hands. (Acts ii. 38-42.) Nor does this ceremony appear to have taken place at the baptism of Lydia and her household, (Acts xvi. 15,) or of the Philippian jailer and his family. (Acts xvi. 31-39.) Neither have we any allusion to the ceremony of imposition at the baptism of Cornelius and his family, (Acts x. 44-48,) nor of Crispus, and all his house, (Acts xvii. 7, 8,) nor yet of Gaius, and the household of Stephanas. (1 Cor. i. 14, 16.) Here then, in a striking majority of cases in which the ordinance of baptism was administered by the apostles, we have no allusion to any subsequent ceremony whatever; and obviously, because each instance was ordinary in itself, and strictly in accordance with the original and permanent design of the gospel as instituted by Christ. These instances form the *rule* by which we are to determine the design of the gospel with respect to ordinances: the others, being obviously out of the ordinary course, and being accompanied by circumstances extraordinary in themselves, and miraculous in their effects, constitute the exception, and are therefore not binding upon Christians.

There is one other passage of Scripture which eager zeal, actuated by a painful sense of the meagerness of its proofs, has sometimes appropriated to the support of confirmation. It is contained in a brief narrative of one of the journeys of St. Paul, (Acts xv. 41,) in these words:

"And he went through Syria and Cilicia, *confirming* the churches." It is presumed and argued that confirming the *churches* means the rite of confirmation administered to *individuals*. But this construction of the passage is forced and unnatural. "The expression used by St. Luke of his confirming the churches, proves that he must have planted them at an earlier period. He now confirmed them : *i. e.* he gave them such regulations as were necessary for their welfare." These churches were composed of persons but recently converted to the faith of Christ, who required to be established in the principles and practice of the gospel ; and their confirmation in the faith and hope of Christianity was the prime object of St. Paul's visit. The supposition that his visit was for the purpose of administering the ceremony of confirmation, is absurd in itself, and unsustained by either a just interpretation of the passage, or the common consent of Scripture.

In closing these arguments against the scriptural authority for the rite of confirmation, it affords the writer no small measure of satisfaction to be able to support his own opinions by the testimonies of several of the most distinguished Reformers. Their language partakes of the stern, but truth-loving spirit they evinced throughout their opposition to Popery. These authorities are derived from a most invaluable work "On Apostolical Succession," by the Rev. Thomas Powell, Wesleyan Minister.

"The Waldenses, those illustrious witnesses to the truth against Popery, speaking on this subject, say, 'This is that which they call confirmation, which we find *not* instituted, either by Christ or his apostles ; therefore, such a sacrament\* is not found needful to salvation ; whereby God is blasphemed, and which was introduced by the devil's instigation, to seduce the people and to deprive them of the faith of the church, and by such means they

---

\* The Reformers speak of confirmation as a sacrament, because it was so regarded by the Papists. The substitution of the word *ceremony* would perfectly correspond with their views. They opposed it, not because it was held as a *sacrament*, but because it was taught as a *divine institution*.

might be induced the more to believe the *ceremonies* and the *necessity* of bishops.' Wickliffe also says, 'It does not appear that this sacrament should be reserved to a Cæsarean *prelacy*; that it would be more devout and more conformable to Scripture language to deny that the bishops give the Holy Spirit, or confirm the giving of it; and that it therefore seems to some that the brief and *trivial* confirmation of the prelates, and the ceremonies added to it for the sake of pomp, were introduced at the suggestion of Satan, that the people may be deceived as to the faith of the church, and that the state and necessity of bishops may be more acknowledged.' Melancthon observes, 'The rite of confirmation, as retained by bishops, is altogether an *idle ceremony*.' Ravanel, whose work had the approbation of the French Reformed Church, says, 'The wrangling Popish divines maintain the dignity and efficacy of confirmation *above* the sacrament of baptism itself, for they assert, that it is not lawful for any one but a bishop to confer it, while they concede that a presbyter can administer baptism; and they impiously teach that confirmation is a certain perfecting and consummating of baptism, as if those were to be counted only *half Christians* who are baptized only, and not confirmed; whereas the apostle testifies that we put on Christ in baptism.' Calvin exposes the absurdity and impiety of taking the act of the apostles in conferring the *visible* and *miraculous* gifts of the Holy Ghost, by the laying on of their hands upon the baptized, as a ground for the *pretence* of bishops to confer the Holy Ghost by the laying on of *THEIR* hands in confirmation. He calls them *apes* of the apostles. He shows that by this kind of pretence they invalidate baptism itself, thus making void the commandments of God by the *traditions* of men, and exclaims, 'O the iniquity of this proceeding!' He then offers ironically an *improved definition* of confirmation, viz., that it is '*a marked disgrace* to baptism, which obscures the use of baptism, yea *abolishes* it; the devil's false promise to draw us away from the true promises of God.' 'The rite of confirmation in the Episcopal Church,' adds Mr. Powell, 'differs

from the Popish one, in that it is *not* called a sacrament, and some ceremonies are laid aside: in *all other* respects it is *equally unscriptural* in its pretences and *dangerous* in its consequences. To establish a claim to it as a prerogative of bishops, in imitation of the apostles, they, the bishops, *must* confer the gift of miracles. The latter they cannot do: the *claim*, therefore, *exposes Christianity to contempt.*”

The following testimony of Bishop Burnet is equally strong and decided against the divine origin of confirmation, and not less valuable because a little later in the order of time. He says, there is “*no express institution of it, neither by Christ nor his apostles;*” and “*NO RULE GIVEN TO PRACTISE IT.*” The whole is merely a matter of human arrangement, and of no higher authority than any other “*commandment of men.*”

Nothing can add to the clearness or strength of these testimonies. They unite alike in repudiating the pretended divine origin of the rite, and in ascribing it to a source neither flattering to the ceremony nor to those who celebrate it. But, however plain, they were honest in their opposition and correct in their opinions, because those opinions accord with both the facts and principles recognised as authoritative in revelation.

We have now examined all the passages of Scripture adduced in support of the rite of confirmation, and find them insufficient to establish its claims to a divine origin. And here we might safely rest our argument; for, if the ceremony we are examining, be not supported by the clear and consentaneous testimony of the sacred writers, it is, beyond all question, without authority as a religious institution, and utterly undeserving of attention as a Christian obligation. But there is one other ground on which the rite of confirmation is urged, and it is important to a just decision on the subject to give to it an impartial, though a brief examination. It is that which claims for the rite the sanction and authority of antiquity.



## THE ANTIQUITY OF CONFIRMATION.

It is maintained that the practice of confirmation may be traced back to the times immediately subsequent to the age of the apostles. This argument for the authority of confirmation is appealed to by the writers whose opinions we have been engaged in examining; but little, however, need be said on the subject. Mere antiquity proves nothing. The word of God is "the only and the sufficient rule of faith and practice." It has become very common to appeal to the fathers for authority in settling questions of faith and practice. We object to the custom as unsound in principle and dangerous in tendency, and deny their authority in determining questions not decided in the Bible. Indeed, except as witnesses to facts occurring under their notice, they have no claim upon our confidence. What they certify as fact may be true, without being either divine in its origin or binding in its authority upon others. "When they put forth their arguments, or their interpretations of Scripture, we no longer regard them as witnesses, but as reasoners, and we pay no greater deference to their authority than to that of other good and pious, though fallible men." No one is bound to subscribe to their opinions, even when he finds a very general agreement in any one interpretation.

The principles here laid down for our government in settling questions of faith and practice are deemed of essential importance in obtaining a right apprehension of "the things of God." They apply at once, and with great weight, to the question of confirmation. In the preceding pages it has been shown that this ceremony, so far from being authorized, is not even recognised among the institutions of the gospel. Consequently the whole burden of proof for authority to celebrate it falls upon the question of its antiquity. But this, however sufficient the testimony may be, cannot establish its claims to divine authority; and it is, therefore, without weight, as a religious obligation. It is not denied that a rite, now denominated confirmation, was practised in "the age suc-

*ceeding* that of the apostles." It would be unreasonable to do so. But it is seriously doubted whether the fact of its practice can be traced up to the age of the apostles. The earliest mention of it is by Tertullian, a writer who lived *eighty years* subsequent to John, the last surviving apostle. From that time it may be traced *down* with some degree of certainty. But previous to the author we have named we have no mention of it whatever. And when we recollect the early period at which "the mystery of iniquity" began to work, and how soon the disciples, even while the apostles were yet living, "turned aside from the holy commandment delivered unto them," the supposition that it was an invention subsequent to the death of the apostles is greatly strengthened. The "form of godliness," in opposition to the "power thereof," was the subject of a severe censure from St. Paul. Even then the stream of corruption, both of faith and practice, had commenced, which increased and widened, until, in the fourth century, the turbid waters had drenched the Christian world and sunk it deep in formalism and apostasy. From the beginning of that awful declension there existed a strong and prevailing desire to *imitate* the apostles—not so much in the purity of their lives and the zeal of their labours, as in the greatness and power of their miracles. It was this desire, corrupted by the growing formalism of the times, and unrestrained by the conservative power of sound religious principles, that led the great body of believers astray from the truth and brought them ultimately to substitute a mass of ceremonies—A SYSTEM OF EXTERNALISM—for the inward and gracious influences of "the power of godliness."

As we find no mention of confirmation as a religious ceremony in the sacred writings, and as, at a very early period, we find proofs of departure from the spirit of the apostles, and corruption of their principles, it is not at all improbable that the ceremony of confirmation was introduced as a kind of succedaneum for the original and essential "manifestation of the Spirit." It is no little proof in support of this conjecture, that the ceremony

was avowedly employed to convey the Holy Spirit, and was conferred, immediately after the administration of baptism, upon infants as well as adults. These facts, while they show a wide and wicked departure from the mode of obtaining the gracious influences of the Spirit as laid down in the Scriptures, do, at the same time, prove a total disagreement between the rite of imposition as it then existed, and as it is now practised in the Protestant Episcopal Church. It was then regarded as a necessary adjunct of baptism, to which infants were uniformly admitted; and it was not permanently separated from baptism until the thirteenth century. The separation of the laying on of hands from baptism was probably commenced as early as the seventh century, but it did not generally prevail until the time above specified. Previously, in opinion and practice, the ceremonies were considered inseparable. In this respect there is a manifest departure in the modern practice from the custom in administering the rite subsequent to the age of the apostles and previous to the seventh century. As many years as may be supposed to intervene between infancy and "the years of discretion" are *now* suffered to elapse before the baptized are brought forward to be confirmed. All, therefore, that Protestant Episcopalians can claim, on the score of antiquity, for confirmation as practised among them, is the retention of a rite which human ingenuity superadded to the divinely established institutions of the gospel, and which has lost even its significancy by the change in the circumstances of its administration.

But, even granting to the advocates of confirmation all that they ask for it on the score of antiquity, the question still recurs, does this settle its authority? Is it divine because it is old? Is it binding because it was practised in "the age *succeeding* that of the apostles?" No one will have the temerity to answer in the affirmative. And yet the truth of all this is assumed in the argument derived from the antiquity of the ceremony. It forms a distinct objection to the rite of confirmation that, however old it may be, it is yet younger than revelation.

It reacheth not to the age of the apostles. Its earliest date is posterior to the establishment of the positive and permanent institutions of the church. It is, therefore, unscriptural in its claims, and without authority as an institution of the gospel.

We have examined the rite of confirmation exclusively with respect to the claims set up for it as a divinely instituted ceremony of religion. But little has been said of its rank among the institutions of the church, its connection with positive ordinances, or its utility in promoting the spiritual improvement of those who submit to its authority. These, as they form a distinct portion of the subject of investigation, and as they are represented in a very strong light, and with superior claims to veneration, by the writers under review, will require a separate and independent examination. It would be impracticable, and it would swell our remarks beyond all just limits, to introduce all that its advocates insist upon as belonging to the ceremony, and as resulting from it. But the strong and more important claims of the rite may be separated from the mass; and the refutation of these will involve the destruction of the rest. In this view of the matter there are three points of interest, frequently introduced and very much insisted upon, each of which it will be necessary to examine.

*Confirmation is taught as a religious ordinance instituted for the procurement of spiritual blessings.*

The numerous and distinctive appellatives affixed to this ceremony by Episcopal writers would be enough, in the absence of all other proof, to justify this opinion. They speak of it as "the holy rite of confirmation," "the apostolic rite," "a sanctifying ordinance," "a merciful medium of grace," "a divine institution," "an additional mean of grace;" and they spread over the subject a skilful sprinkling of such words as "virtue," "blessed," "scriptural," "spiritual," &c. They would magnify the office. Dr. Chapman says, "It is reserved for Episcopalians alone to yield a hearty obedience to its scriptural authority, and to partake of its spiritual bless-

ings." "I know that it is in itself an ordinance most appropriate, impressive, and solemn, and that whoever partakes of it with a glad heart, a willing and understanding mind, is *thereby* sealed by the Holy Spirit of God unto the day of redemption."\* Of the same character is the language of Mr. Clark. Speaking of the condition of the confirmed, he says, "They were thus solemnly set apart to the service of him who had bought them with his blood; and the *Spirit of the living God descended to dwell in them as temples consecrated to his use.*"† And, after affirming that confirmation "is a matter in which all Christians are concerned, as they are in repentance, faith, and baptism," he says, "and this also clearly shows that the laying on of hands was intended to be continued in the Christian church to the latest period of time. *For to the latest period of time, every member of the Christian church will stand in equal need of the sacred influences of the Divine Spirit.*" These opinions cannot be misunderstood. They exalt confirmation into a divinely instituted ordinance of religion, and claim for it the power to dispense spiritual blessings. The proof of these positions would entitle confirmation to the consideration in which they desire it to be held. But no evidence to support them is adduced; and until they be established, serious Christians may be excused for withholding their assent from both the doctrine of the divine authority of the rite, and the laudatory terms in which its achievements are celebrated. We strongly suspect that these positive affirmations of the spiritual efficiency of the rite are superinduced by the conscious defectiveness of the scriptural argument for its authority. It is surprising that the necessity of this proof did not occur to these writers. Then we might have had reasons instead of opinions, scriptural authority rather than merely human assertions. But it is more easy to affirm such results than to prove them. Indeed, notwithstanding the confidence with which spiritual influences are affirmed to

---

\* Sermons, &c. pp. 146, 154. † The Pastor's Testimony, p. 51.

result from confirmation, it is unquestionably extravagant to pretend to any such knowledge, especially by the writers in question, as each of them affirms, in some instances of its reception, results of a directly opposite kind.

Dr. Chapman, with customary confidence, protests "that *whoever* partakes of it with a glad heart, a willing and understanding mind, is thereby sealed by the Holy Spirit of God unto the day of redemption." He had just before with equal confidence affirmed that some of the subjects of the rite were, from the time of their confirmation, guilty of a course of conduct that *so wretchedly belied* their most solemn protestations as to render them unworthy of the holy sacrament. If the latter opinion be correct, the former must be wrong; or else those who were "sealed unto the day of redemption" had most shamefully apostatized from God. But if those who partake of this ceremony "are thereby sealed unto the day of redemption," it may be asked whether the sealing grace of the Spirit is secured by the state of the "heart" and "mind" of the subject, or by the laying on of the hands of the bishop? If the former, may it not as certainly be secured without imposition of hands? If the latter, is it not necessarily independent of any condition in the moral feelings of those who submit to the rite? And on both suppositions, is not the recipient exposed to a most dangerous delusion—either by omitting to seek the blessing through the appointed channel of faith and calling upon God, or by actually seeking it through a medium not capable of conveying it? Both are mischievous. In one, he will fall short of the mark: in the other, he will wander wide of the way.

Nor are these difficulties relieved by the positions assumed by Mr. Clark. It may be objected to him, that if confirmation concerns Christians as repentance, faith, and baptism do, it surely must be a scriptural concern, resting upon the same broad ground of obligation; and the proof must be as clear and decided in the one case as it is in the other. Why then is it not produced? No

one doubts his duty with respect to repentance, faith, and baptism : on no subjects is the voice of revelation more clear and decided. Is it so with respect to confirmation? Let the passage be produced. It cannot be done. The Scriptures furnish no proof either of the authority of the rite, or of the obligation of submitting to it ; nor do they contain a solitary promise of making it the medium of the divine blessing. Indeed, other, and very different modes of seeking that precious gift of God, the grace of the Holy Spirit, are prescribed in Scripture. But nothing is said, no, not a word, of conveying spiritual blessings through the imposition of the hands of a bishop. Upon what authority then can it be affirmed that the graces of the Spirit perpetually depend upon the rite of confirmation? But, as if to show the extravagance of these pretensions, Mr. Clark, also, is led to the disproof of his assertion that, upon the confirmed, "the Spirit of the living God descends to dwell as into temples consecrated to his use," by stating that many of its subjects are "confirmed in sin," and find the ceremony to be to their souls "a savour of death unto death." These concessions uproot all the claims set up for confirmation as the appointed medium of receiving the grace of the Holy Spirit.

But in opposition to all such instructions, and for the procurement of spiritual blessings, the Scriptures "show us a more excellent way." Upon the general subject of obtaining religious knowledge, it is written, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth liberally to all men and upbraideth not;" and particularly of the gifts and graces of the Spirit, the Saviour instructs us thus to seek them : "If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." It is obvious to every one diligently reading the Scriptures, that the only authorized way of obtaining "the fellowship of the Spirit" is by prayer and faith. The communion of the Holy Ghost is God's gracious "gift" to them that ask it. It is not to such as receive imposition of the hands of a bishop that

grace is promised, but to "every one that *asketh* it." This rule, as to its subjects, is without exception and without limitation. It was the gracious promise of Christ, that he would "give us the Holy Spirit, that he might *abide with us for ever*." And this gift is direct and personal. Each must ask and receive for himself. The *promise* belongs to every age of the church, and to every member of the body of Christ; and its fulfilment depends, not upon imposition of hands, but upon the prayer that goeth not forth out of feigned lips. *This* God will not despise: *that* he does not promise to regard. In proof of these positions, a multitude of passages might be produced from the Scriptures; but, as neither of the writers in question attempts to support his opinions by the word of God, there can be no necessity for introducing them. It will be time enough seriously to discuss the spiritual efficacy of confirmation when an attempt is made to *prove* it the medium of conveying "spiritual blessings!" Until this be done, we are content that "Episcopalians *alone* should yield a hearty obedience to it."

*Confirmation is insisted upon as affording a just opportunity for the assumption of the vows made for children by their parents or sponsors in baptism.*

The *authority* to impose these vows is a question antecedent to that of confirmation, as affording the means of assuming them personally. If there be no authority for exacting the vows in the first instance, there can be none for the obligation of a subsequent assumption of them. And yet it is upon the ground that these vows are *required* and *given*, that confirmation is urged as a duty upon those who have been baptized in the Protestant Episcopal Church. That church exacts the promise of a future declaration of the Christian faith before she admits an infant to baptism. In the office for the public baptism of infants, it is provided that "there shall be for every male child to be baptized, when they can be had, two godfathers and one godmother; and for every female, one godfather and two godmothers." The sponsors personally are required, and promise *in the name of the child*, to



“renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the sinful desires of the flesh;” to “believe all the articles of the Christian faith as contained in the apostles’ creed;” and to “obediently keep God’s holy will and commandments, and to walk in the same all the days of their life.” This is a cruel exaction : it is unreasonable, because compliance is impossible ; and unjust, because it is without a vestige of authority from the word of God. And when it is considered that the church has no reasonable ground to believe that the vows thus assumed will ever be seriously regarded as a duty, the whole transaction appears additionally extravagant and objectionable.

But if the terms on which the church admits the assumption of these vows be examined, it will be found that a corresponding laxity exists with respect to the nature and amount of the qualifications demanded of candidates for confirmation. Unless the commitment to memory of “the creed, the Lord’s prayer, and the ten commandments,” with the ability to answer a few questions on the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s supper, be considered equivalent to the renunciation of all sin, and the belief of all the articles of religion, there is nothing in the qualifications for confirmation answerable to the solemn pledges exacted at baptism. The Prayer Book declares “the order of confirmation” to be for “those who are *baptized and come to the years of discretion*”—“to the end that *children* being now come to the years of discretion, and having *learned* what their godfathers and godmothers promised for them in baptism, may themselves, with their own mouth and consent, openly before the church, ratify and confirm the same; and also promise, that by the grace of God they will evermore endeavour themselves faithfully to observe such things as they, by their own confession, have assented to.” In the prayer, *after* the ratification of these vows, and *before* the imposition of hands, the bishop says, “Almighty and everliving God, who hast vouchsafed to regenerate these thy servants by water and the Holy

Ghost, and hast given unto them forgiveness of all their sins," etc. But upon what authority does he say this? It is obvious, that the ritual does not require regeneration as a condition of admission to the rite of confirmation. The ceremony does not suppose it to result from the imposition of hands, as its existence is acknowledged previous to the act of imposition. It must, therefore, be traced either to the "water," or to "the Holy Ghost," or conjointly to both, in baptism. But either of these suppositions nullifies the doctrine, that the grace of the Holy Spirit is conveyed by the imposition of hands in confirmation.

That we have not mistaken the views of the church will appear from the writers heretofore quoted. "In baptism, we make a solemn vow and covenant promise to God, that we will be his people. In the rite of confirmation we renew the promise and ratify the vow. Those who were baptized in infancy, thus voluntarily assume the *covenant engagement that was entered into in their name*, and avow themselves, by their own act, disciples and followers of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus they ratify and confirm what had before been done *on their behalf*."\* And, according to Bishop Meade, "their parents and sponsors *pledge* them, at baptism, to a public declaration of the faith as soon as they shall reach the years of discretion."† The language of Dr. Chapman is of the same purport: "In the opinion of the church, all persons that have been baptized should be confirmed. Confirmation in her judgment is, therefore, properly administered to all baptized persons, who have attained an adequate knowledge of the *elementary principles* of their religion, and are so fully convinced of the necessity of making them the practical rule of their lives and conversation, as publicly to re-enact those baptismal vows, wherein they had before, either by themselves or by their sureties, renounced the devil and all his works," etc.‡ Now whatever else may be thought of confirmation, it is undeniably

---

\* *Pastor's Testimony*, pp. 45, 46. † *Sermon on Confirmation*, p. 10.

‡ *Sermons*, p. 148.

the opinion of the Protestant Episcopal Church, that it rests as a solemn obligation upon all baptized within her pale *because* their sponsors, at baptism, "pledged them to a public declaration of the faith." All, thus baptized, and who have reached "the years of discretion," and can "say the creed, the Lord's prayer, and the ten commandments," may claim confirmation as a *right*, without even the pretence of personal holiness. And we find nothing in the established formularies of the church to authorize the belief that such a claim would be rejected. In the view we are now examining, the obligation to be confirmed rests upon the authority of the church to exact the pledges made *for the future faith of infants* at the time of their baptism. If there be no authority for imposing these vows, there can be no obligation to assume them. This then is the true question at issue. By what authority does the church demand the promise that the child to be baptized shall, when it comes to "the years of discretion," make "a public declaration of the Christian faith?" Is this a divine institution, or a human device? It is unquestionably human. It is not even pretended to be divine. And it is, therefore, wrong in the church to make the exaction, as well as an imposition upon the conscience of those who, in subordination to her authority, give promises it is impossible to keep, even if they desired to keep them; and which, if regarded with indifference, as is generally the case, become additionally burdensome to the conscience, and injurious to the moral feelings. If the nature of these vows be properly considered, these difficulties can be neither removed nor relieved by the subsequent assumption of them, by those for whom they were made, unless, on the part of the sponsors, they have been kept to the very letter. An enlightened conscience could never consent to make *such* vows, nor would it ever shuffle them off upon terms so easy and accommodating. But there is not only no authority for exacting these vows, there is no *propriety* either in the demand or in submission to it. We see no possible ground for justification in either case.

So far then, as confirmation is practised for the purpose of affording children, when they shall "reach the years of discretion," an opportunity of assuming the engagements made in their name by their sponsors, at baptism, it is wholly destitute of authority. Nothing like it can be found in the word of God. Indeed, it is in direct contravention of the principles laid down in the gospel of Christ. As we cannot repent for another, so neither can we believe and obey for him; nor yet can we compel either his faith or obedience.

*Confirmation is urged as a very appropriate rite for the admission of individuals to the fellowship of the church.*

Mr. Clark says, "the *propriety* of this rite will not be questioned by any, even though they are not convinced of its divine origin. All Christian churches have some form by which members become connected with their body. The rite of confirmation is the scriptural mode by which persons become avowedly and formally introduced as members into communion with the Episcopal Church."\* Bishop Meade, after defining "the participation of the Lord's supper as a mode of publicly confessing Christ," says, "in receiving candidates to this complete union with the church of Christ, some suitable preparatory exercises, examination, and forms of admission, must, of course, be adopted by those to whom the government of Christ's church and the administration of his ordinances are committed. These methods vary in different denominations of Christians. In some, the candidate is required to give an account of his conversion, his faith, and his hope, before the members of the church, and is received or rejected by a vote of the same. In others, such examination is conducted before a more select number, who decide on the admission or exclusion of the candidate. In others, this duty is confided more entirely to the ministers, who, in private conference with the persons desiring to come to the communion, advise as may seem best. It is not our intention to express any opinion as to

---

\* The Pastor's Testimony, p. 53.

the real or comparative merit of these different *rites* which have been adopted to secure the important end of guarding the purity of the churches, by excluding unworthy persons from the communion. *God hath doubtless blessed them all, and made them more or less effectual to the end in view.*"\* He then defines confirmation to be the authorized mode of admission to the communion of the Episcopal Church. Both of these writers admit that "confirmation is the specified mode of admission to the communion of the Episcopal Church." On this branch of the subject but little need be said.

The *right* of the various Christian churches to establish such modes of admission to their communion as to them may seem best adapted to promote the objects of the union, is distinctly recognised. Neither of the writers insists upon confirmation as either the exclusively or the divinely authorized mode of admission to the fellowship of the church. They neither question the authority nor deny the propriety of other modes of admission. They only prefer the method appointed by their own church, and leave others to the same freedom of opinion.

This admission of the *right* of each church to adopt its own form for the reception of communicants, although the concession involves some of the most important principles in the Episcopal controversy, reduces the dispute to a very small compass, and makes the claims of confirmation to depend upon its greater adaptedness to the end in view, and its superior influence in promoting that end. A comparison of its advantages over other modes of admission to the church, and the most flattering exposition of its intrinsic excellence, would only bring us to the point of choosing between two, perhaps widely different, but equally adventitious rites of religion. Now there can be no doubt, the more simple ceremony more nearly resembles the practice of the apostles, and is less liable to deceive and mislead; while the greatest injury to vital godliness might be justly looked for in connection with, and result-

---

\* Sermon, pp. 8, 9.

ing from the more formal. The history of the rite of confirmation would furnish an interesting but painful corroboration of this opinion. Simplicity, whether considered with respect to the private character of Christians or the public ceremonies of the church, is the purest and most attractive decoration of Christianity. It is the highest credit of a Christian, that "in simplicity and godly sincerity he has his conversation in the world;" and surely, so far from diminishing the reputation, it must increase the authority and usefulness of a church to avoid every thing, in the public ministrations of religion, that seemingly departs from the simplicity of the gospel. If a comparison be instituted between the rite of confirmation as "the specified mode of admission to the communion of the Episcopal Church," and the other modes enumerated by Bishop Meade, it will be found that, with fewer elements of "the pomp and circumstance" of ceremony, and equally good claims to the respect and confidence of serious Christians, they are far more simple and unassuming in their forms, and less liable to impose upon the understanding or mislead the feelings. In these respects the other forms of admission have a decided advantage over confirmation. And if, as Bishop Meade allows, "God blesses them, and makes them effectual to the end in view," we may rest satisfied of their propriety and utility. What God blesses must be *right* in itself, and *worthy* of his approbation.

In the preceding pages, attention has been directed almost exclusively to the consideration of such views of confirmation as its advocates present in support of its claims to a divine origin. But little has been said respecting the direct practical effects of the ceremony, or in opposition to the really anti-scriptural principles on which it is based. The fact that the rite, as well as the reasons for it, is without the least warrant from the word of God would, as a matter of course, among serious Christians, invalidate its claims to confidence, and justify any suspicion of its utility that such a circumstance is calculated to create. But when, in the absence of all just authority for its

celebration, it is urged as an imperious obligation, fraught with the most important spiritual benefits, and capable of imparting to its subjects the holiest and most exalted enjoyments of the gospel, it becomes a solemn Christian duty to expose the extravagance of the claim, and rebuke the pretensions upon which it is founded. In doing this, although, in charity to the prejudices of education, the advocates of confirmation should be treated with forbearance and respect, it is, nevertheless, conceived that the rite of confirmation is entitled only to such consideration as may be due to a ceremony not authorized by God, and of no real utility to man; and yet represented to possess a divine origin and spiritual powers, and to convey to the heart "the hope of salvation" and "the comfort of the Holy Ghost."

The rite of confirmation, as held and practised by the Protestant Episcopal church, is very justly subject to a variety of serious and weighty objections. Our limits, however, will only allow us to notice a few of the most prominent. And such of these as we shall introduce, will be sustained by facts and arguments that it will be impossible to gainsay or resist.

*The first objection we urge against the practice of confirmation is, that it is NOT BASED UPON A SOUND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE.*

We do not now speak of the *opinions* entertained of confirmation by those who justify the practice. The opinions of many who advocate the claims of the rite, are sound as respects the qualifications of those who should be confirmed. But the *practice* of the church is essentially distinct from these opinions; and the practice of the church is the best interpreter of her opinions. *The Protestant Episcopal Church does not base the ceremony of confirmation upon a sound religious experience.*

Mr. Clark, in the work so often referred to, introduces sundry letters from persons who were confirmed *according* to "the order of confirmation" of the Episcopal Church; but who, in after life, were "taught of God," and "obtained the salvation which is in Christ Jesus." After

their conversion they gave this account of their *religious* condition at the time of their confirmation. These letters are thus introduced by Mr. Clark: "From several communications now in my possession, written by eminently pious persons, deploring the lax practice that has prevailed in reference to this matter in some of our churches, I make the following extracts." \*

"The only instructions that I had till I attained my sixteenth year were, to repeat the catechism by rote, attend the service of the sanctuary, and rigidly observe the Sabbath. At this time I was *confirmed*. I then determined, by my own good deeds and in dependence upon my own strength, to escape the punishment of hell and obtain admission into the joys of heaven. There never was one word spoken to me on the duties of religion, by either friend, relation, or minister. Had there then been presented to my view the ruined and lost condition of a sinner, with the love of the dying Jesus, I might have known something of my own sinfulness: I might have seen that I was a child of wrath, and justly condemned to the eternal torments of hell, and have sought to obtain an interest in Christ. What a fearful omission of duty is it to neglect the instruction of the young in the things which belong to their eternal safety!"

"Another thus writes: 'I had been early taught to pray and read the word of God, and from the mere force of habit practised these duties daily; and when scarcely fourteen, being urged by my parents, I presented myself a candidate for confirmation, and after some preparatory exercises ratified my baptismal vows. I believe I then first seriously felt the operations of the Holy Spirit. I had not even read the service; and when called upon among the other candidates to give my assent to the several requirements, I was greatly agitated, and would have retired to my seat, being deeply sensible that I had never even *intended* to dedicate myself to the service of God. I reflected a moment: perhaps I might displease my parents, perhaps draw remarks that I was unable to meet from others, being known to many around me. At length, influenced by these motives, I determined to remain; and to quiet my conscience, I determined, by many resolves on the spot and in my own strength, to keep the solemn promises.'

"From a third, I make the following extract: 'I cannot look back to the season of my confirmation but with feelings of sorrow. I was totally ignorant of the nature of the vows I was taking upon me: I tremble, I shudder, to think how careless I then went into the presence of God: I wonder that the wrath of God did not consume me. I was led to go by the persuasion of my friends. They told me that I was old enough, and that I ought to go. I shall never forget when I first felt the bishop's hand on my head, and heard those solemn words uttered, 'Defend, O Lord, this thy servant.' Surely I was not the servant of God, but of Satan. I had not given up my darling lusts, and

---

\* The Pastor's Testimony, p. 70, 72.



though I sometimes tried to pray, it was always a wearisome task, and I soon forgot all the obligations I assumed.'

"The testimony from a fourth shall close these extracts: 'At the age of fourteen, I presented myself a candidate for confirmation, agreeably to the custom of the church, without one serious thought on the subject. So far from it, I believe it was the gayest period of my life. I was not examined by any minister, nor did I have a personal interview with any. My name was handed to the Rev. — by my father, and he simply asked my age. Thus I was *confirmed* at the giddiest period in my whole history. I believe I came very little behind Miss —, who had a hair-dresser to arrange her head on Sunday morning, and came in a carriage without a hat, just in time to kneel at the altar. I do not mean to say that I went through all this ceremony, but my heart was just as vain and worldly. Naturally of a quick temper and volatile disposition, I never dreamed of debarring myself from any pleasure suited to my age and taste. I contented myself with the mere form of godliness, while I was ignorant of its power.'

These facts will speak for themselves, and they will serve to show the nature of the requirements for confirmation, as well as the character of its subjects. It is singular that such proofs of the inutility, if not impiety, of confirmation should be found in a work written avowedly to establish the divine origin and perpetual obligation of the ceremony, and to support the opinion that upon those "thus solemnly set apart to the service of him who had bought them with his blood, the Spirit of the living God descended to dwell in them, as temples consecrated to his use." Some of them, it is likely, had "not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." And yet they were confirmed; and the bishop thanked God for having "regenerated them, and given them remission of all their sins." After these falsifications of the doctrine, it is puerile to pretend that the graces of the Holy Spirit are conveyed to the heart by the laying on of the hands of a bishop; and it is worse than childish to insist that *the church* bases confirmation upon a sound religious experience. But these facts also show that if the ceremony be not "a solemn mockery" to God, it is a cruel delusion to those who submit to it. They seek the living among the dead, and find the savour of death where they had been led to expect the well-spring of life and salvation. These are humiliating considerations. It is painful to contem-

plate them, especially in connection with the bitterness of disappointment felt by those who, honest but misguided, realize the utter futility of all the promises of the "blessed efficacy" of "the holy rite of confirmation." But humiliating as these facts are, we are obliged to Mr. Clark for their publication. They must exert a direct and powerful influence against a practice founded in error, and fraught with mischief; and wherever they are known and duly considered, they will carry the conviction of the utter inefficiency of confirmation to secure or promote true piety of heart. Nor will they be less useful or authoritative in illustrating the meagre qualifications required of those who are exhorted to "come forward to confirmation."

*Another objection against confirmation is, that IT CREATES A LOW AND DEFECTIVE STANDARD OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.*

This conclusion might be very naturally inferred from the preceding facts; but apart from all such influences and effects, it is the legitimate product of the principles involved in the rite of confirmation. It has been heretofore proved that spiritual regeneration is not a prerequisite to confirmation. It is enough if the subject can repeat "the creed, the Lord's prayer, and the ten commandments." These fit him for the ceremony; and he is taught to consider the laying on of the hands of the bishop as divinely ordained for the conveyance of spiritual blessings. He, therefore, in submitting to the rite of confirmation, expects to receive the grace of the Holy Spirit, or at least to be certified of, and confirmed in, a gracious state by the imposition of hands. But how such an act can be a sign, evidence, proof, or confirmation of a personal, saving interest in the atonement of Christ, is a mystery that he has not the sagacity to comprehend. Yet he submits; and if he be not deluded, is pardoned and assured of his acceptance with God, without having personally bestowed any attention upon the moral precepts of the gospel. The operation of such a system must be pernicious upon all the interests of personal holiness; especially as it evades or lessens the obligations of personal repentance and personal

faith. These, although essential to holiness, do not enter into the requirements for confirmation. It will not be denied that the candidate admits the obligation of his baptismal vows, and assumes the engagements made for him by his sponsors. But is this the Christian doctrine concerning the terms of acceptance and forgiveness with God? Is a man's professing that he repents, and promising that he will live godly, that actual repentance and amendment of life, which alone can insure the divine pardon and favour? Again: is the belief "of all the articles of the Christian faith," "believing in *Christ* with the heart unto righteousness?" Does such a "belief" in any correct sense involve true and saving faith in Christ? In a word, may not all the articles of religion be embraced and believed, in utter ignorance of "the *faith* whereof cometh salvation?" In these questions we have supposed the candidate for confirmation to be sincere, and yet, with all his sincerity, he may be devoid of a saving interest in Christ.

But suppose him insincere, or only actuated by custom, or under the influence of persuasion. In either case he is neither a penitent nor a believer, although he professes to be both. And yet he is confirmed, and assured in solemn words and most imposing forms, that he is *a child of God*, and that by the imposition of hands he is *sealed to the day of eternal redemption*. This assurance is couched in the most absolute terms. And to render the matter more certain and impressive, the bishop, on his knees, thanks God for having given unto him "*forgiveness of all his sins*," *all* his actual personal sins!

It is not the least objectionable feature of this ceremony, that the most of those thus assured of the pardon of their sins the bishop never saw before, and many of whom, a little inquiry would satisfy him, are impenitent in feeling and ungodly in life. Now, it is one of the greatest evils of this system, that many believe it and become satisfied of its assurance of pardon and salvation. But such a result is not justly a matter of surprise. It enters into the *design* of the ceremony to make such an impression; and

surely nothing can be more desirable to those who celebrate it, if they have any confidence in the claims they set up for the rite of confirmation. But does such an impression constitute true Christian experience? Certainly not. All this he may have—the church's signature and the bishop's blessing—and yet lack the one essential evidence of acceptance with God—the *witness of the Spirit*. In the absence of this, all assurances of pardon, from whatever source, or by whatever forms of absolution or confirmation, are not only nugatory but deceptions, and full of presumption and danger, and if they be sought and believed, must inevitably issue in the creation of a low and essentially defective standard of Christian experience. Indeed, how can it be otherwise? The persons who come to be confirmed are taught to regard the bishop as an ambassador of Christ, a successor of the apostles, in office and authority, and a special minister of God in performing a ceremony fraught with spiritual blessings. Now, when they hear this sacred person so solemnly declaring that they are fully justified, pardoned, and regenerated by the Holy Ghost, it is not surprising if they believe it, and rest satisfied that their souls are in a safe and happy state. And this conviction will rest alike upon the minds of all admitted to the ceremony, whether they be impenitent, penitent, or believing; for in confirmation there is no recognised differences of character. All are brought to the same undistinguishing level. The same vows are required, the same thanksgiving is uttered, and each is alike "certified of the favour and gracious goodness of God" toward him. Now those who submit to the rite are either Christians, or they are not. If they be Christians, in what are they confirmed? In the truth of Christianity? They knew that before. Or will it be said that they were, by the imposition of hands "certified of the favour and gracious goodness of God?" They knew this also before. In what, then, are they benefited by confirmation? "If," to use the strong figure of a sensible writer, "a professor of astronomy should undertake to demonstrate the truth of the Copernican system, by laying his hands on the heads of students,

the man would be deemed fit for a strait jacket." And yet he might, upon as good grounds, and with as much hope of success, resort to such a method of communicating a knowledge of the science of astronomy, and with far less of absurdity and presumption, than could a Christian minister, by the same process, undertake to demonstrate the truth of the gospel, or to convey to the soul the grace of the Holy Ghost—the only satisfying evidence of "the favour and gracious goodness of God." But suppose the subject to be *not* a Christian, in what is he profited by confirmation? This question shall be answered by an Episcopalian of no ordinary distinction.\* He says: "If an impenitent and unbelieving person presents himself for confirmation, in what can he be confirmed? Not in Christian faith, for he is destitute of that gracious principle. Not in Christian holiness, for he is manifestly unholy. *If confirmed in any thing, it must be in violation of his sacred vows, and in his disobedience to the commandments of God.*"† This is all very true; and yet it is obvious that before it can be assented to, at least by the candidate for the rite, he must totally discredit the veracity and power of the church; or if he believes them, it is at the risk of self-delusion, and of being *confirmed* "in disobedience to the commandments of God." It is evident, therefore, that the ceremony of confirmation imparts nothing to a Christian that he did not previously possess; while, according to good Episcopal authority, it leaves the "impenitent and unbelieving" in a really worse condition than it found them.

Now, to say nothing of the operation of such a conclusion against the claims of confirmation to a divine origin, it is absolutely ruinous to all the arguments wrought out in support of its *utility* for even the most

---

\* Dr. Henshaw, of Baltimore, afterward Bishop of Rhode Island.

† These opinions, sound and correct as they are, are acknowledged to be different from those commonly received in the church. He says, "I am sensible that my views upon this subject differ from the sentiments of some vastly my superiors in age, station, talents, and piety." Mr. Clark quotes and approves the sentiment.

common and ordinary purposes of the church. A recurrence to the cases cited from the work of Mr. Clark, will serve both to illustrate and confirm this opinion. From these cases it is demonstrable that the ceremony of confirmation, notwithstanding the gracious efficiency attributed to it, has really no power to confer spiritual blessings; and they carry on their face the evidences of a most serious injury to the moral feelings of those who, confiding in the promise of the church, and her assumed power to dispense those blessings, sought through her authorized channel to be assured of, and confirmed in, a state of favour and acceptance with God. The requirements of the church were met and satisfied, although nothing was derived from the ceremony in correspondence with her assurances of what would be the direct effects of their submission and confidence. There is a close connection between these cases and the position now under consideration; and their application to the real merits of the question is too forcible to be evaded or lessened by the plea that they were extreme in their nature, and uncommon in their occurrence. For even admitting both of these pleas, it will still follow that spirituality of heart, is neither the *condition* nor the *effect* of confirmation. And it will not be denied that while the want of piety in those who are confirmed is a serious objection to the ceremony, it actually strengthens the argument against its supposed spiritual efficiency. Nor, as it cannot be denied that "impenitent and unbelieving persons" are admitted to confirmation, is it available to either the authority or the efficacy of the rite to deplore it. The system is based upon unwarrantable and antisciptural principles, and such results are its legitimate productions. It cannot be otherwise in the present condition of human nature. Men at all sensible of the importance of religion, and assured that it may be obtained on terms so facile and accommodating, will not hesitate to avail themselves of the opportunity of being made, *by the imposition of hands*, "temples consecrated to the use" and residence of the Holy Spirit. "And as full remission of sins, and

the favour of God are to be had upon such easy terms, could we be surprised to see thousands eagerly flocking from all quarters to accept it? or, that persons of very wild and profligate characters should often thrust themselves in, to partake of this benefit, and be seen receiving upon their knees episcopal absolution, and solemn assurances of God's favour and grace?"\* The fact that comparatively so few submit to the ceremony is a striking evidence of the general disbelief of its claims, both as an institute of Christianity and as a medium of obtaining the divine blessings.

It were well if, in addition to its inability to confer spiritual benefits, confirmation could be considered nugatory. But this is not the case. It is not a nullity, either in its principles or its effects; nor is it less influential upon the faith and feelings of its subjects, because of its identity with error and presumption. Indeed, this very fact gives it its permanency, and its power to work evil to individuals, and injury to society. In failing to fulfil its engagements, it leaves a blight where it had proffered a blessing; and this injury falls with most weight upon those least prepared to meet it, in consequence of their spiritual imperfection. So that, while the good are made no better, the bad are made a great deal worse. It is impossible to pass through such a ceremony, with the promises it makes and the hopes it excites, without serious injury to the moral feelings. For, if no change be wrought in the heart, a powerful and disastrous impression is made on the mind. And the disappointed subject of the rite is left to the conviction that either the gospel has no power to bless, or that its blessings fall not on the spirit—that Christianity is a system of externalism, and Christian experience the cajolery of superstition—that the sacraments are the channels of salvation, and the church the source of hope and consolation: in a word, that religious joy is the off-

---

\* Towgood's Dissent, as quoted by Rev. D. Isaac. Works, vol. I. 121.

spring of delusion, and love the language of presumption. Or, satisfied that, by the imposition of hands, he was constituted a Christian, and filled with the hopes without the graces of religion, he toils through life in a fruitless effort to equalize the bishop's thanksgiving with the state of his heart and the requirements of God.

The prevalence of low and defective views of Christian experience, and the increase of formalism, are legitimate effects of such a system of teaching truth and imparting spirituality. It cannot but be that numerous and continually increasing evils will result from the practice, evils not less mischievous to the faith and affections of individuals than they are to the integrity and purity of the church. It will learn men to substitute the livery of the church for the garment of salvation, the bishop's blessing for "the fruit of the Spirit," the outward and visible sign for the inward and spiritual grace. A church in such a state may have a solemn ritual and impressive forms, but to Him who "seeth not as man seeth," and who judgeth not according to the outward appearance, but according to the inner man of the heart, it will be a splendid sepulchre, enclosing unhumbled minds and impenitent hearts.

*It may be furthermore objected to the rite of confirmation, as practised in the Protestant Episcopal Church, that* IT DEGRADES BAPTISM AS A CHRISTIAN SACRAMENT.

The sacraments are positive institutions of Christianity, established by Christ, and designed for universal and perpetual observance as means of grace. Of these sacraments, Protestant Christians acknowledge but two—baptism and the Lord's supper. The Papists add five more, "confirmation, penance, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction." The Protestant Episcopal Church says, "these are not sacraments of the gospel, being such as have grown partly out of the corrupt following of the apostles, partly are states of life allowed by the Scriptures; but yet, have not like nature of sacraments with baptism and the Lord's supper, for that they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God." Now, as confirma-



tion is not "a state of life," and as it has no "visible sign or ceremony *ordained of God*," it must have originated, as, indeed, it is here admitted, in "a *corrupt following of the apostles*;" and it is, therefore, of no authority as a Christian institute, and not binding as a religious duty. In rejecting confirmation as a sacrament, and for the reasons stated, it was evidently designed to deny its rank as a Christian ordinance, and lessen its claims to veneration and respect as a medium of the divine blessing. And yet it is a somewhat remarkable instance of human inconsistency that a rite originating in the corruption of apostolical practice, and denied to have any "visible sign or ceremony *ordained of God*," is yet retained among the institutions of the church, and made obligatory upon all who would enter into her communion. The Methodist Episcopal Church more consistently joins in the denunciation of the ceremony as a sacrament, and then rejects it.

The early history of confirmation will corroborate the opinion that the rite originated "in the corrupt following of the apostles," and also justify the position on which these remarks are founded. Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem, tells those who were baptized, that "they were first anointed in the forehead, to wipe away that shame which the first man by his transgression had contracted, and that they might with open face behold the glory of the Lord. Then they were anointed on the ears that they might have ears to hear the divine mysteries. After that, on the nose and breast, that they might be a sweet savour unto the Lord, and being armed with the breast-plate of righteousness, might be able to withstand all the insults of the devil." The author of the Apostolical Constitutions represents a person who has been baptized, but not confirmed, as "no better than a Jew: he has put away the filth of the body by water, but is not purified from the pollution of the soul by the Spirit." And at a later period, Pacianus, Bishop of Barcelona, in Spain, says, "the seed of Christ, that is, the Spirit of God, brings forth a new man, by the hands of the priest, out

of the womb of the church, which is the font, faith being the bridemaids to all this. And without these three sacraments, the laver, the chrism, and the priest, this new birth is not effected. For, by the laver, sin is purged; by the chrism, the Holy Spirit is poured down upon us; and both these we obtain by the hand and mouth of the priest; and so the whole man is regenerated and renewed in Christ." In the English Church, Bishop Taylor declares, that until we are confirmed, we are imperfect Christians. Such, "*without a miracle*, are not perfect Christians," *i. e.* not really Christians at all. In the ancient form, the bishop, after anointing the body with chrism, and making the sign of the cross, put his hand on the head of the candidate, and said, "I sign thee with the sign of the cross, and confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Baptism, without all this nonsense, was supposed to be incomplete; and hence confirmation was soon magnified far above baptism, and these most ridiculous ceremonies were added to it to command the admiration of the ignorant and the reverence of the superstitious. Now, although the Protestant Episcopal Church has very wisely rejected these mummeries as unnecessary to the ceremony, and unworthy of the attention of serious and enlightened Christians, she has nevertheless retained the principle on which they were introduced and for which they were always employed. These ceremonies were founded upon the supposed insufficiency of baptism to unite us to Christ, and were intended to show, that what was lacking in the sacrament was, at least, if not more than made up in the ceremony of confirmation. Thus, a positive institution of the gospel, established by Christ, and placed in the foremost rank of religious ordinances, is made to truckle to a rite acknowledged to have "no visible sign ordained of God," and which originated, not in divine appointment, but "in the corrupt following of the apostles." If this conclusion be just, it is impossible to screen the Protestant Episcopal Church from the charge of adopting it as a

principle, and making it the rule of her practice. It is a matter in which this discussion has no concern, that this conclusion affixes guilt upon the principle, and censure upon the practice of confirmation. It belongs to those involved to evade the consequence or to lessen its turpitude. But whatever may become of the moral question involved in this conclusion, it is demonstrable that the position, among religious ordinances, to which confirmation is raised, and the arguments by which it is sustained, do, in fact, and by consequence, degrade baptism as a *Christian sacrament*.

Calvin's ironical definition of confirmation is no less correct than severe. He defines it, "*A marked disgrace to baptism, which obscures the use of baptism, yea, abolishes it: the devil's false promise to draw us away from the true promises of God.*" The appropriateness and truth of this interpretation give it peculiar force. But it is not less proper and true now, in its application to those who consider confirmation a ceremony, than it was originally to those who held it as a sacrament. For, although it is now denied to be a sacrament, it is nevertheless made to usurp the place of a sacrament, and elevated above it, in rank and importance, and in utility and spiritual efficiency. These positions as they are involved in the opinions and practice of the Episcopal Church may be easily established. The following arguments will determine the soundness and correctness of the position:—

*First.* In the gospel, as constituted by Christ, and carried out in the practice of the apostles, baptism is, as a sacrament, or ceremony, the only appointed prerequisite to the reception of the holy communion.\* But in the Episcopal Church this arrangement is laid aside, and confirmation is made indispensable to admission to the sacrament of the Lord's supper. On this subject the position of the church leaves no room for doubt or dispute. At the close of the confirmation service the following direction

---

\* Acts ii. 41, 47.

is given to all who minister at her altars—and they are bound in conscience to obey the rubric: “And there shall none be admitted to the holy communion, *until such time as he be* ~~be~~ *firmed, or be ready and desirous to be confirmed.*” It ~~do~~ not lessen the force of our position to say that the church does not require the candidate for the holy communion to be *actually* confirmed, as her object will be secured by the *desire* to be confirmed. For, although, in some instances, from the absence of the bishop, and other causes, persons desirous to partake of the ceremony might not be able to do so, and, therefore, would not be rejected from the communion; yet, in the sense of the rubric, *unwillingness* to be confirmed, would, as effectually, exclude them from the sacrament, as would a refusal to submit under circumstances favourable to its reception. So that confirmation, either *actually received*, or *earnestly desired*, is indispensable to admission to the holy sacrament. And it would be a departure from church principles to admit any one to the sacrament who rejects confirmation as a Christian institute and a moral duty; for the adoption of both of these principles is required of all who seek to be admitted to her fellowship. Nor can this conclusion be evaded by the argument sometimes resorted to, that this is a private arrangement, intended to operate upon the internal economy of the church, and not designed to influence her with respect to those not of her fold. This is only concealing the objection without changing its nature, or shifting its position. For the question still recurs, and with redoubled force, What authority has the Protestant Episcopal Church to change the terms of communion as established by Christ, or to make a difference, with respect to the sacrament, between her own members and the rest of the body of Christ? But, having put asunder the two sacraments of Christ’s institution, by thrusting a mere ceremony between them, and thereby disuniting what was perpetually to be “joined together,” the reasons for the divorce ought at least to be given. This, however, is not done; and for the reason that as there was no authority to make

the substitution, so there are no grounds upon which to justify it.

*Secondly.* That baptism, although declared to be a sacrament, is held to be inferior to confirmation, is demonstrable from the fact that while a ~~minister~~ ordained minister is considered competent to baptize, only a bishop is allowed to confirm. Now when the peculiar views of the Protestant Episcopal Church, with respect to the nature and grades of the ministry are remembered, the reason of this difference, and especially as it applies to the subject before us, will be readily perceived. By this arrangement several important ends of church policy are secured. Among others, the bishop is first elevated to extraordinary rank and authority, and then clothed with supernatural rights and powers; and confirmation becomes the channel through which, in virtue of his office, he communicates, to kneeling sinners, assurances "of the favour and gracious goodness of God."

It is now time to bring this inquiry to a close. In prosecuting our examination into its authority, we have found this rite deficient in every thing that could legitimate its title to a Christian institute, or its claims to Christian confidence. As we find no trace of it in Scripture, so we feel justified in adopting the opinion, and in impressing it upon others, that it originated "in the corrupt following of the apostles;" and is therefore not binding upon Christians. But it is not only without authority as an institute, it has no promise of grace, and is of no utility to its subjects. Indeed, from every view we can take of it, it can only issue in deep and durable injury to those who seek it as a medium of grace and salvation. Having no authority from God, and not based upon either true repentance or saving faith, it necessarily creates low and defective views of religion, and fosters a class of principles and feelings, not only erroneous in themselves, but really injurious to the advancement of the soul in the knowledge and love of God.

